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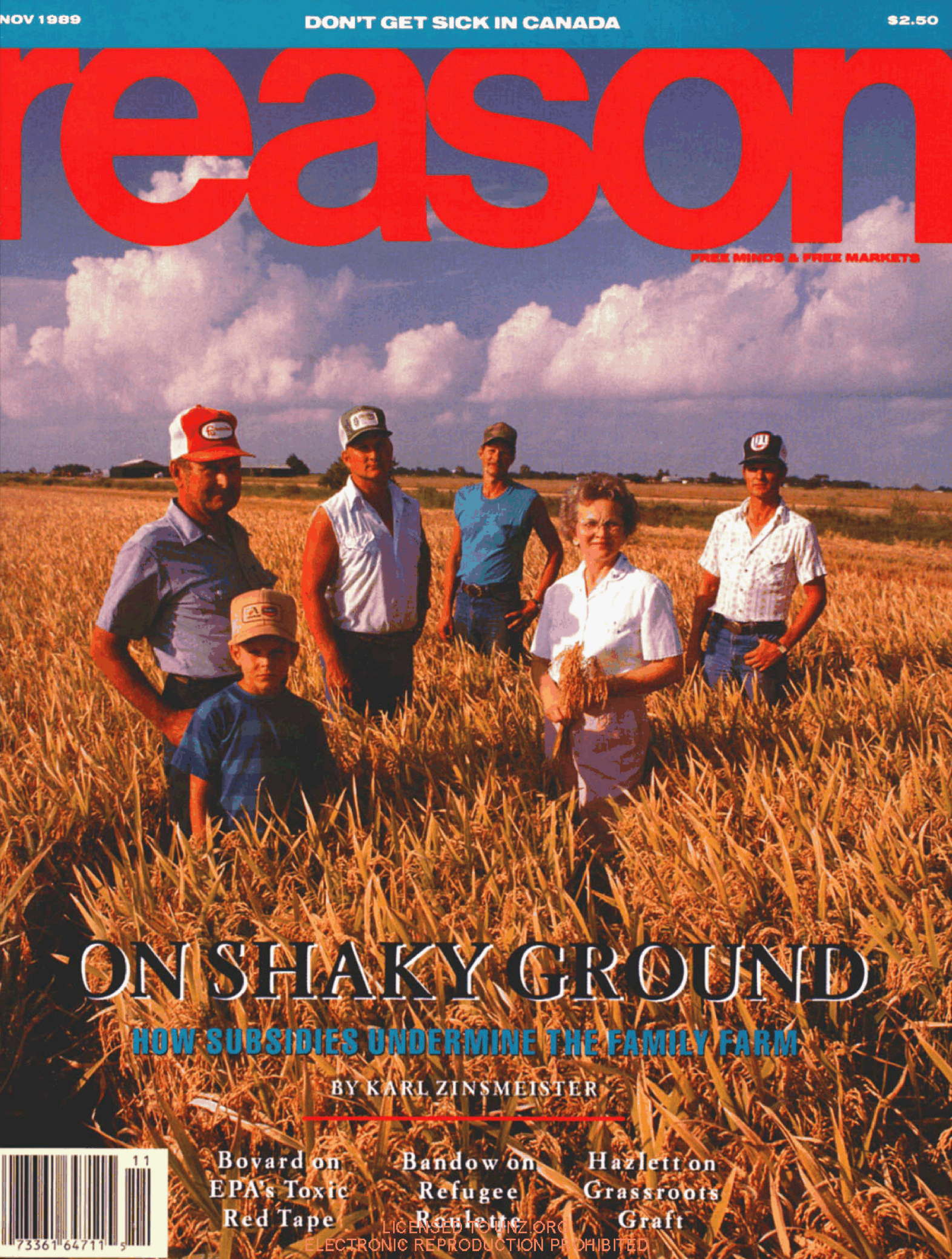

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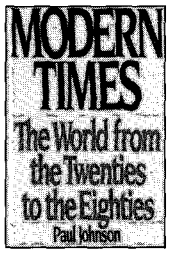

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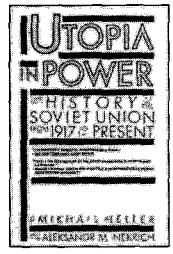

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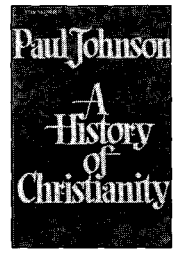

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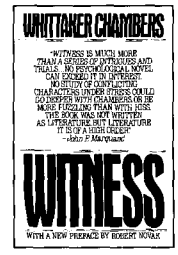

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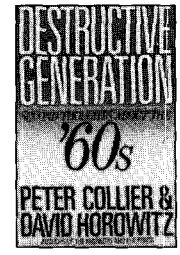

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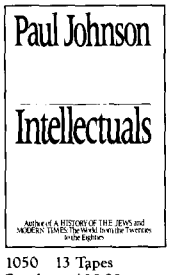

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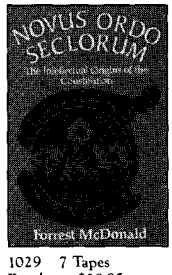

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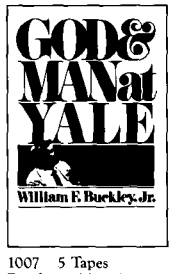

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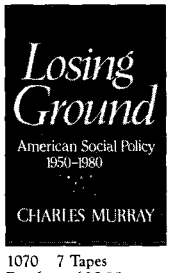

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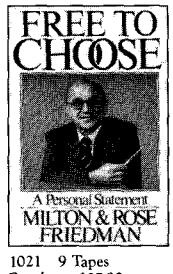

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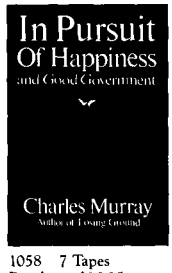

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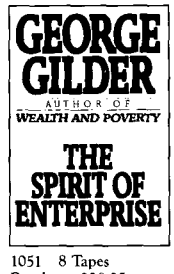

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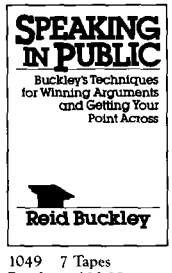

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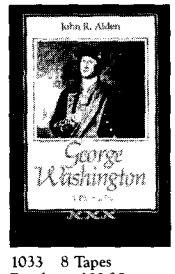

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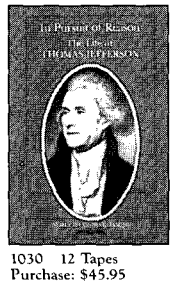

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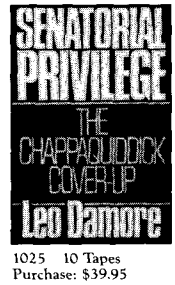

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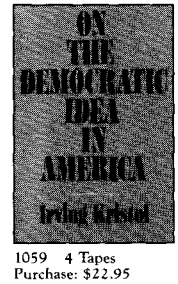

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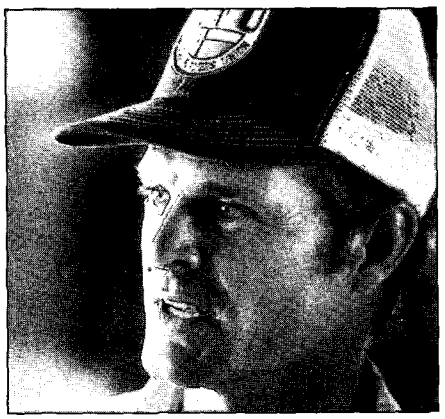

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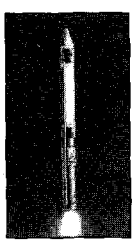

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Cover photograph of the Priesmeyer family by Jonathan Nourok. (From left to right: Arthur, grandson B. J. Hicks, Terry, Lester, Gracie, A. J.)

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BLACK AND WHITE ISSUES

VIRGINIA I. POSTREL

When Yusuf Hawkins was harassed, shot, and killed by a gang of thugs, I was appalled. Somehow, I thought other people who purport to care about crime in the streets might also be appalled.

Here was a young man, on his way to look at a used car, minding his own business, who was set upon and killed by a pack of young hoods. Like the young investment banker who was brutally raped and beaten in Central Park, Hawkins was an innocent victim of a vicious crime. On that score, he could have been any of us.

But, of course, Hawkins was not any of us. He was black—and he was killed because, and only because, he was black. That has made all the difference.

About this incident, politicians and pundits who rail against other urban crimes are silent at best. George F. Will has written nothing—a dramatic contrast to his (in my mind, correct) condemnation of the Central Park muggers as "evil." Pat Buchanan has written nothing, though he did criticize on TV the people who marched to protest the killing. President Bush has said nothing.

This utter lack of concern is nearly as appalling as the crime itself. It indicates that these men have in fact been using crime as a political issue only to pander to racism—not because they really care about crime. Their liberal critics appear to be right.

Yusuf Hawkins himself was the victim of specific individuals. But our public discussion of race, and of race and crime, is the victim of ideas.

The first, and most pernicious, is that race relations are really about crime and that crime is a racial issue. This idea follows from a darker assumption: that blacks in general, and black men in particular, are criminals. As far as I can tell, this assumption is held nearly universally by whites living in and around northeastern cities.

It is true that blacks make up a disproportionate number of the people arrested in this country—29 percent, although they compose only 12 percent of the population as a whole. But the odds that any given black person is a criminal are miniscule, especially since repeat offenders account for many arrests. (And, of course, blacks are also disproportionately likely to be the *victims* of crimes, particularly crimes committed by other blacks.)

Yet many whites have developed habits of mind designed to reinforce their picture of blacks as criminals and law-abiding blacks as exceptions to that rule. When I was first out of school, I lived in a predominantly black neighborhood in Philadelphia. One evening, my purse was snatched by a group of teenagers. The first question most people asked me was, Were they black?

Since there were no white teenagers in the neighborhood, the answer isn't too hard to figure out. And I could all but hear the gears turning in my questioners' minds, as they tallied up another piece of anecdotal evidence that blacks are criminals.

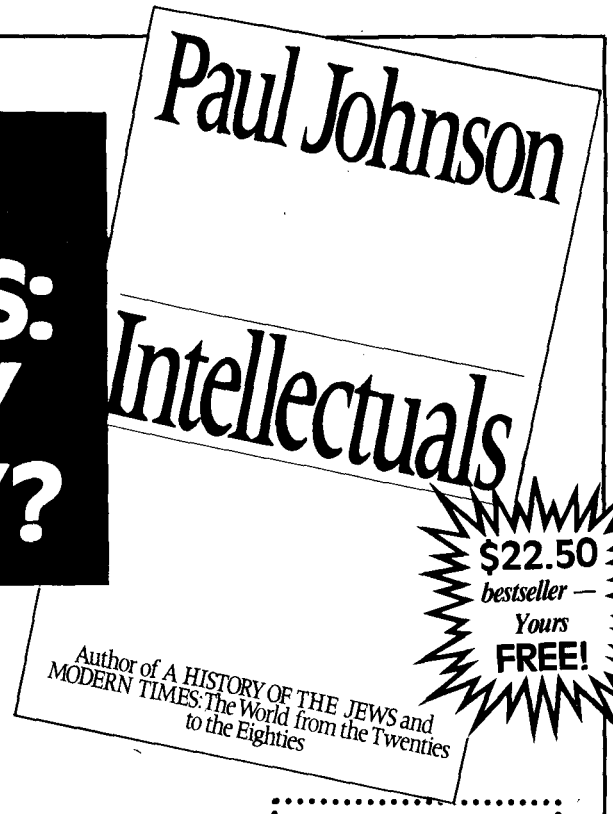
Yes, the purse snatchers were black. But so was the jogger who pursued them along with the police. So was the neighbor who walked by and lent sympathy. So was the security guard in my building who told me sternly but caringly that I ought to be more cautious; he wouldn't let his wife go out like that, with her purse dangling loosely by her side. None of these people, or the many other law-abiding black individuals I came into contact with every day, counted in my questioners' calculations.

The second, related assumption is that neighborhoods have value over and above individuals. Some people defend Hawkins's killers on the grounds that they were protecting their turf against an outsider and that such actions, while unattractive, are necessary to preserve neighborhoods from crime and disruption. Neighborhoods become defined by their exclusion of outsiders. They shouldn't have killed Hawkins, one Bensonhurst woman reportedly commented, just roughed him up a bit.

This is obscene. In a free country, any individual must have the absolute right to walk freely down any street—or, for that matter, to buy or rent a home from any willing owner—in any neighborhood. That, as some defenders of the Bensonhurst killers aver, a white person might not be safe strolling through Harlem does not justify what happened in Bensonhurst. It merely demonstrates that black criminals in Harlem are no better than white criminals in Bensonhurst. Crime is a lamentable fact; it is not a justification for more crime.

The third assumption is that victimhood justifies violence against innocent bystanders. This idea has two formulations: The Bensonhurst version—because affirmative action is unfair, whites are victims and can be excused for attacking blacks. And the Spike Lee version—because racism is evil, blacks are victims and can be excused for attacking whites. Neither makes much sense. Both are used by violent individuals to lend a patina of political respectability and morality to

LIBERAL INTELLECTUALS: HOW DO THEY GET THAT WAY?



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grossly immoral conduct.

All of these assumptions, and many others that poison the discussion of race in this country, share two characteristics: They regard people primarily as members of groups rather than as individuals and they decline to hold individuals responsible for their actions.

It is far easier to lump people into groups than to assess each as an individual. And throughout most of American history that is how public policy has gone. Labeling and classifying—whether to preserve segregation or to fill affirmative action quotas—has been the order of the day.

But this is a nation whose very identity springs from the recognition of the inherent worth and inalienable rights of each individual, as an individual. To create a political order based on group rights betrays our ideals and, ultimately, invites our downfall.

Writing two decades before the Civil War, Alexis de Tocqueville predicted that blacks and whites in the South would wind up warring against each other, with one race wiping the other out. (He thought there were too few blacks in the North to generate such conflict.) That it has never come to that is some sort of tribute to our common humanity.

But it is tragic that in 1989, a young black entrepreneur—a Republican, the graduate of elite schools, a supporter of the National Rifle Association, the friend and indeed boyfriend of whites—would find it necessary to write in the *New York Times*: "I used to ignore the menacing glances of police officers, the contemptuous glares of average white citizens, being followed by security guards whenever I enter a store and my inability to flag down a taxi in Manhattan. But I cannot help wondering now what brought about this miserable state of affairs. Why is this happening to me in my own beloved country? Do white people secretly aspire to intern us all in jails or concentration camps—to permanently do away with us?"

Devin S. Standard, and others who wonder the same thing, deserve to be told no. And they deserve to be told no not merely by people who want to use Bensonhurst to attack social-spending cuts or to condemn Supreme Court justices who take a dim view of affirmative action. They deserve to be told it by George Bush and George Will and Pat Buchanan. And by me.

AN UNWINNABLE WAR

CHARLES OLIVER

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. In 1972, Richard Nixon announced a total war against dangerous drugs and appointed the first drug czar. In 1982, Ronald Reagan declared war, with a multiagency attack on drug smugglers. Vice President George Bush led the task force. Federal spending on drug enforcement jumped from about $1 billion in 1981 to more than $3 billion in 1988. Drug seizures grew to an all-time high. And today, cocaine is cheaper and more easily available than it has ever been.

Now, it's George Bush's turn. As in every other area of public policy, President Bush isn't pushing anything radically new. A little more money, a few more prison cells, tougher sentences for drug pushers. Even the rhetoric is familiar: "drugs are sapping our strength as a nation"; "drug use is wrong and dangerous"; "the toughest domestic challenge we've faced in decades." With a few minor changes, that speech could have been delivered by any of the last five presidents.

Will Bush's war on drugs be any more successful than his predecessors'? It depends on how one defines success. Bush and drug czar William Bennett have told us their goal. They want to reduce the number of cocaine users by 10 percent over the next two years.

The number of people using cocaine will probably drop by 10 percent, but it won't be because of any drug war. Cocaine use is already in decline. The number of regular users has fallen 48 percent since 1985. There are many reasons for the decline, and federal drug policy is the least important.

The deaths of John Belushi and Len Bias showed that careless use of cocaine can kill. The increased availability of cocaine made it less glamorous. Sitting in a hot tub in Malibu, snorting coke through a $100 bill may be chic, but sitting in an apartment in Harlem with a glass pipe in your hand is definitely gauche. Finally, and probably most important, the baby boom generation is getting older, settling down, and starting families. Parenting is difficult; it's even more difficult if you're wired.

Still, while casual use of cocaine will decline, it will never completely disappear. And there remains the problem of crack addiction among the underclass. While addiction is not unknown among the middle class, it is in the ghettos of America that crack addiction has reached epidemic proportion. President Bush's plan won't change this.

Every time someone uses crack, she risks her life. The emergency rooms of our big-city hospitals are filled with people who have accidentally overdosed on crack. And to get the stuff a person risks being killed in some gang war. If these risks doesn't stop someone from using crack, the threat of imprisonment isn't going to be much of a deterrent.

But crack isn't the real problem in our inner-cities; it's only a symptom. The real problems are broken families, lack of jobs, poor self-esteem, a rotten education system, and everything else that drives a person to seek solace in chemicals. But these are complex problems that can't be solved by pretty speeches, photo ops, and a few more federal dollars.

We can't win a war on drugs, but we could win a war against drug violence. Today, gangs of heavily armed teenagers rule the streets of many large cities, fighting among themselves to con-

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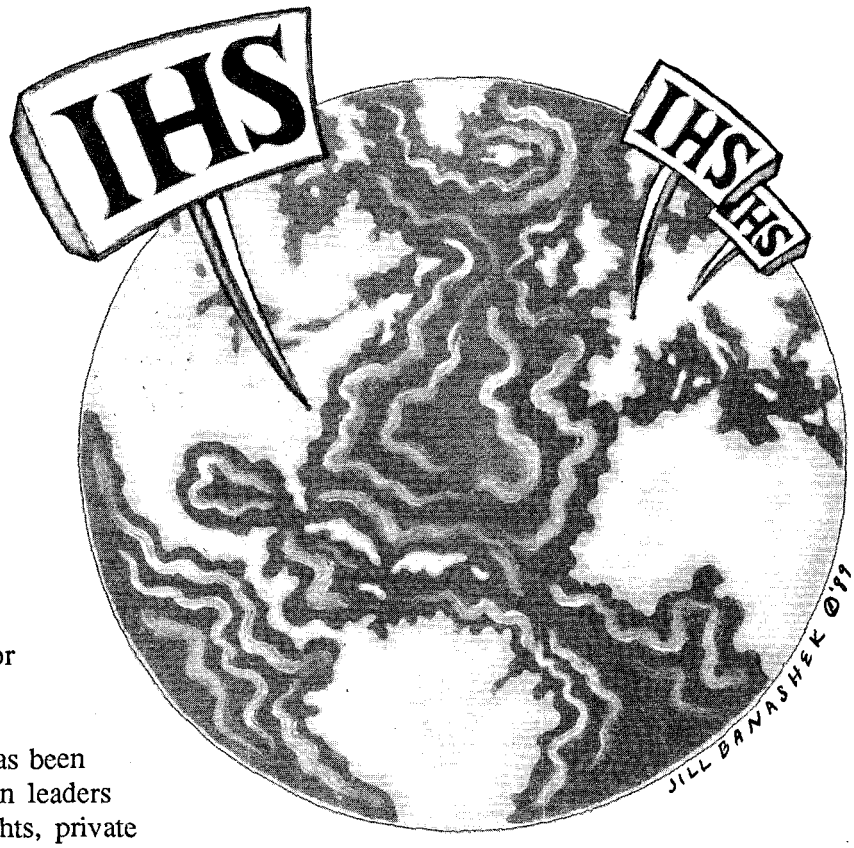

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trol the drug traffic in those neighborhoods. But this is nothing new. During Prohibition, gangs waged war against each other to control the liquor market. We stopped that violence by repealing Prohibition. Legitimate business stepped in, and the huge profits from illegal alcohol disappeared. We could end most of the gang violence today by repealing the Prohibition on cocaine and other drugs.

But George Bush won't do that. And his war on drugs will be about as successful as those of Reagan and Nixon. A few more laws on the book, a few more people in jail, and people will still be able to find whatever drugs they want.

ON TO MARS?

JACOB SULLUM

Space beckons to every child who first looks through a telescope at another world or gazes at the night sky with the knowledge that every star is a sun. As we grow older, some of us lose that sense of awe and excitement, finding it incompatible with practical concerns. Others develop a lifelong passion for space exploration in all its forms.

Space enthusiasts who believe in limited government have long been caught in the middle, unwilling to relinquish the dream yet uneasy about depending on the state to fulfill it. Recent events illustrate that tension.

In a speech marking the 20th anniversary of the Apollo landing, President Bush called for a permanent base on the moon, an expedition to Mars, and the eventual settlement of the solar system. Science-fiction fans get an undeniable thrill from hearing anyone—even George Bush—talk about such prospects as if they were practical goals. And when daring space projects are carried out, as in 1969, even people who don't know Fred Pohl from Poul Anderson have an urge to stand up and cheer.

The appeal of such achievements goes beyond mere jingoism. The *we* of space travel—as in, "Will we go to Mars?"—is the entire human race. It is tempting, therefore, to argue that the sheer inspiration of the space program constitutes a public good that is worth spending enormous sums to provide—$100 billion in current dollars for Apollo,

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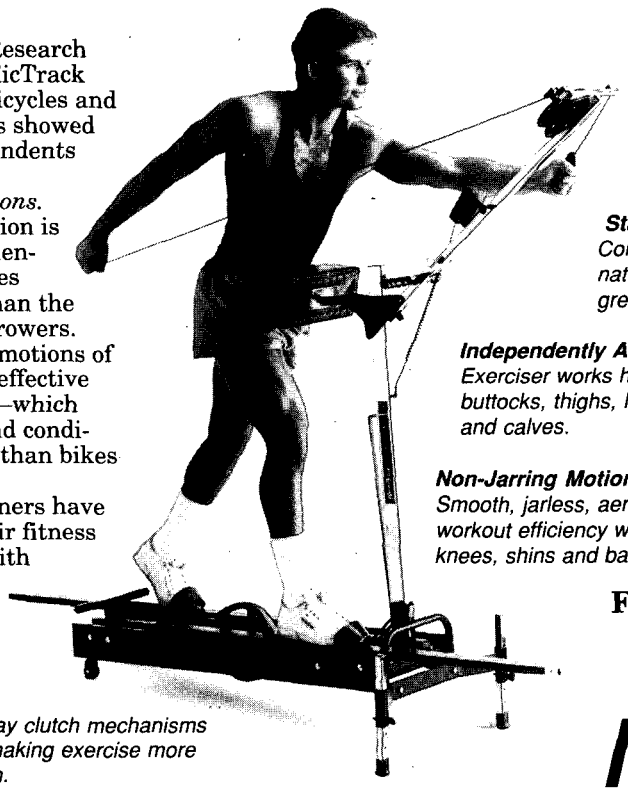

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some $400 billion for a Mars mission. But this is really just a form of the argument that government should subsidize all the good things that some of us fear people would not pay for voluntarily.

While it is currently unrealistic to suppose that a moon base or a Mars expedition could be funded noncoercively, not all space projects are so expensive. Voyager's spectacular rendezvous with Neptune this summer was a reminder that unmanned probes can explore the solar system far more cost-effectively than people can. Scientifically, Voyager is considered the most productive space mission ever, yet over a 17-year period it has cost a relatively modest $865 million.

Using more-sophisticated technology and freed from the constraints of government control, a private, international consortium of universities and scientific institutions could no doubt reduce the cost of such projects. Space enthusiasts would then have the opportunity to put their money where their mouths are. About 9.3 million people visit the National Air and Space Museum each year. If each gave a few bucks, they could help pay for further exploration of the solar system.

At least one aspect of space activity, the launch business, no longer needs to depend on contributions, whether from the government or from individuals. This year and next, McDonnell Douglas, Martin Marietta, and General Dynamics will launch 15 satellites. Smaller firms—including California's American Rocket Company, which has developed the first launcher designed for commercial purposes—are also beginning to compete with government operations.

Those disappointed by the utilitarian nature of such profit-making ventures should recall the space shuttle boondoggle. Launch companies are sticking with rockets because they work—they deliver payloads at an affordable cost. That does not mean the private sector is abandoning progress. Research into more-exotic technologies will continue, and returnable spacecraft will be used when—and only when—they make economic sense.

By monopolizing space, NASA has not only preempted private action, it has distorted our expectations so that the development of viable alternatives seems anticlimactic. With projects such as Apollo, the space shuttle, and the proposed space station, the government has consistently jumped ahead of what could be justified on rational grounds.

When you're spending other people's money, it's easy to accept "because it's there" as an adequate rationale; the free market does not allow for such a luxury. But after all, a space project is only worthwhile if it produces economic or scientific benefits that outweigh its costs. That means the future is bright for the launch business and for unmanned probes. Mars will have to wait.

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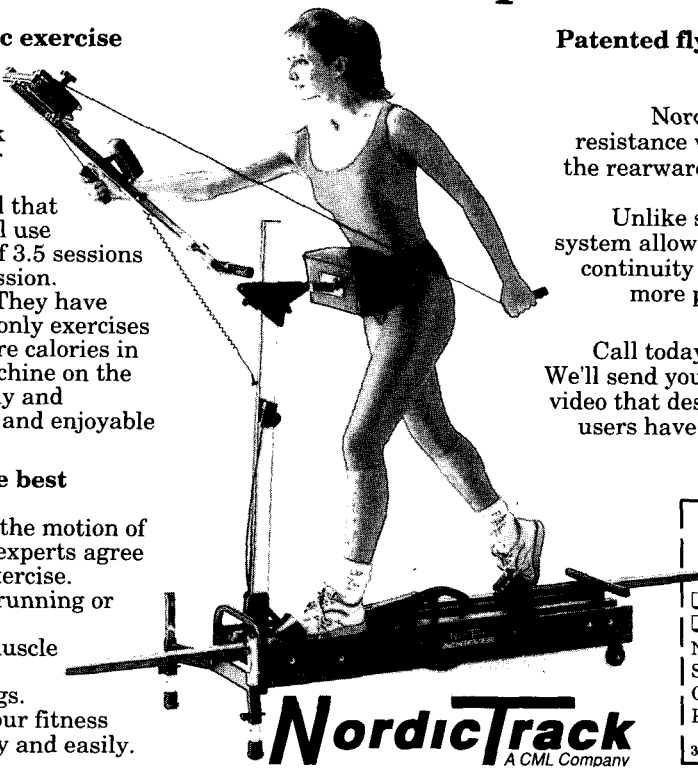

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LETTERS

Slow-Growth Pains

I don't care much for Steven Hayward's article "The Growth Brokers" in your August/September issue. The writing style was good; the reasoning, lousy. Basically he criticizes the "slow growth" movement that seeks to limit excessive real estate development. I live in an area where I wish to God there had been an effective slow growth movement about 20 years ago.

I bought my home here in 1955. I wanted to get out of the crowded city—Tacoma—and into a place with some elbow room. This area, then called Adelaide, looked like an ideal spot: lots of room (nearest house 300 feet), plenty of woods, and friendly neighbors who mostly minded their own business. Nobody bothered to lock their doors—or needed to. Nearest business district was 3 miles away, nearest traffic light about 10. The crime problem was near zero. Plus, these conditions were protected by single-family-dwelling zoning. Ideal place to raise a family.

It seems a natural law in our present society that anytime you discover something good—depend on it—the vultures will gather and try their best to take it away or destroy it. In this case the vultures were the developers. About two decades ago they started buying up big tracts of land and petitioning the county authorities to change the zoning. Zoning restrictions were removed, huge chunks of natural beauty were bulldozed flat, and condos and shopping centers were packed in tightly. The area, now called Federal Way, currently has around 60,000 residents, horrendous traffic jams, uncounted traffic lights, a growing crime problem, a hint of future water rationing, and a property tax about five times what it used to be.

After ruining my neighborhood, they have the nerve to call the mess "progress." Progress is improvement—this is actually "regress."

Howard J. Hanson
Federal Way, WA

Mr. Hayward replies: Mr. Hanson's letter is a model example of NIMBY (Not-In-My-Back-Yard) thinking. And one would have to be wholly insensitive to have no sympathy with Mr. Hanson's perception, which is rooted in the seemingly innate human dislike of change, or at least change that makes one's life less convenient. But can this sentiment be the basis for sound public policy?

Consider: I've never heard of a single developer who sells his products at gunpoint. I make the point this way to dramatize how developers have become a red herring in the growth controversy. Mr. Hanson's real quarrel is not with "vulture developers," but with the *customers* of developers, who all too often have the bad taste to pay money for these ostensibly tacky and ruinous new homes and commercial buildings. Blaming developers as the cause of the problems of growth is about as accurate as blaming car manufacturers for causing traffic. Developers without customers go by a different appellation than "vulture": They are known as "bankrupt." Just ask John Connally and his Texas friends.

The point is, growth is natural, and therefore unstoppable without tyrannical government. The fault for the kind of problems Mr. Hanson describes—traffic, water shortages, etc.—belongs generally to state and local government, who fail properly to accommodate growth (preferring to spend their vast revenues on income transfer programs instead), rather than with developers, who are usually restricted in their private ability to provide services such as new roads and water lines. To encourage greater government control or restriction on development, as

Mr. Hanson's letter advocates, not only misses the point but entails a further extension of government control over private property, the peril of which readers of this journal do not need to be instructed in.

As I say, I have deep sympathy for Mr. Hanson's experience, but justice compels me to conclude that there is no basis in right to regulate where other people may live and work so that our own lives will be comfortable, or our views unobstructed. Finally, a salient point to remember is that people in Mr. Hanson's position—long-time residents of fast-growing areas—are usually the biggest winners in terms of increased property values. Thus, if people like Mr. Hanson place their highest value on trees and open space, they usually have ample means to move to such a place—a financial option most of the newcomers no doubt envy.

Debate Not Yet Aborted

Although I initially disregarded Virginia Postrel's "Reconsidering Roe" (May), the series of letters in the August/September issue requires a rebuttal lest libertarians grossly tarnish their intellectual and philosophical heritage. The founders held very strong religious and moral views—although Tibor R. Machan fails to adequately explore them—clearly enunciated in the Declaration: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life...."

Similarly, Rod Long's illogical assertion that "a fetus is not a bystander but an aggressor...and so [its] right to life does not entitle it to demand the use of its mother's body as an incubator," nesciently denies the nature of the causal relationship. The fetus can no more aggress against his/her mother than can a pot of boiling water on the stove. Rather, there exists a clear responsibility, for a man and a woman, when they engage in the procreative act (or drive recklessly, or consume too much alcohol, or...). To seek to evade personal responsibility for one's actions is inconsistent with the classical liberal premise. Is there not, after all, a logical and moral inconsistency when we, on the one hand, criticize government welfare programs for allowing individuals to abdicate personal responsibility, and yet seek the same "right" when it comes to our physical behavior? As Dr. Ron Paul has noted, "A careless attitude toward the sanctity of human life can hardly promote an energetic and intellectually acceptable defense of individual rights."

Robert P. Roth
Mt. Zion, IL

THE LETTERS SECTION of the August/September issue dealing with abortion was as provocative as most feature articles—bravo!

I found disturbing the letters that suggested the question of whether a fetus is a "life" is irrelevant since the fetus is a mere parasite and hence entitled to no legal protection. The ramifications of such a contention for other "parasites" (such as children?) whose welfare taxes other people's liberty are sobering.

The problem with many of my fellow libertarians is they indulge their nihilistic impulses and overlook the necessity of individuals' taking responsibility for the consequences of their actions. The creation of a human life is surely a foreseeable consequence of sexual intercourse.

Clint Bolick
Arlington, VA

Wrong Number?

If the purpose of REASON is to advance the cause of libertarianism, this mission is ill-served by the soft thinking evidenced in John Dentinger's article ("The 976-ME Decade," Aug./Sept.). In it he lambastes conservatives as cantankerous fools who quake with fear at every new technological development. Drawing such false distinctions between conservatives and libertarians serves no purpose and damages the credibility of the libertarian movement.

Conservatives support the free market because it provides the most goods and services to consumers at the cheapest possible prices. Among these goods is, obviously, better phone service, and I don't know any conservative who doesn't believe that local phone service should be deregulated.

And, by the way, Buckley's comment about standing athwart history referred not to the advance of technology but to the rising tide of socialism—a sentiment strongly shared, one would suppose, by the readers of REASON magazine.

John Merline
Washington, DC

BECAUSE I WAS LEFT LAUGHING I take no offense, but John Dentinger might more carefully mark the line between plain facts and satire: Some readers might be left believing that the "telephone company" has all this time actually known who was ringing that phone, deliberately withholding the information from the answering party. Although phone numbers eventually make it onto phone bills, that takes a few days—days, not seconds—to traverse the machines and desks of the accounting departments.

Telephone manufacturers have had the equipment and programming for immediate display of calling numbers for only the last five years. We the public continue waiting to buy it and use it because federal and state regulators, who know more about consumers' needs and desires than do we ourselves (satire), have needed all that time to decide to finally allow it into parts of the market (fact). And once we get our incoming-number displays, they will only function if the calling phone is "close enough" to the ringing phone. Technically, the communications systems could forward the incoming phone number across the world, but legally, our federal judicial system has forbidden its transfer across any of the 100 "LATA boundaries" that have been drawn on the U.S. map.

Any fault here is not with the workers and leaders of the communications industry but in the government that used to

protect it from stimulation and now restricts it from response.

David JJ Iverson
Saint Charles, IL

...Lest Ye Be Judged

I was sickened and angered by Paul Weaver's grossly inaccurate review of Nathaniel Branden's *Judgment Day: My Years with Ayn Rand* ("The Unbearable Lightness of a Protege's Being," Aug./Sept.). The review contains many shocking, easily confirmed factual errors regarding the book's content. Among them are his claims that Branden:

- "says that in the effort to satisfy the need for ecstasy, people should do whatever turns them on," making war and taking drugs included, "and not look back";
- "wants us to understand that he has no regrets";
- "insists that the only thing amiss in his relationship with Rand was an age difference."

Additionally, Weaver frequently uses the flimsiest of excuses to fly into his own shallow, cynical, overreaching speculations. A glaring example is Branden's alleged "lightness" referred to in the review's title. In other cases, the reader is left with the impression that these flights represent ideas expressed in the book.

I found *Judgment Day* to be a thoroughly believable, enormously inspiring story of a man's winning struggle for integrity and happiness. Reading the book brightly colored my personal life, long sections of it giving me the sustained and marvelous experience of seeing through the eyes of one who deeply loves life and his own soul. Weaver's review does a great injustice.

Merrill Gibson
Culver City, CA

IN DESCRIBING A REVIEW OF *Atlas Shrugged* in *Judgment Day* Nathaniel Branden said, "The review attacked the novel on every possible level. I recall, as clearly as if it were ten minutes ago, my stunned inability to grasp how anyone could permit himself such dishonesty and lack of intellectual scruples."

That statement describes exactly my response to your review. How could it be possible to read *Judgment Day* and then attribute the following to Branden: "If sex is your thing, Branden counsels, get thee into the sack. If religion, athletics, drugs, or war is what you get off on, he declares, do it and don't look back"? This is simply dreadful misrepresentation.

Duane Goddard
Vista, CA

WHERE MR. WEAVER FINDS Dr. Branden vindictive or hostile, I find him compassionate and frank. Where Mr. Weaver finds Dr. Branden without regrets, I find him reporting in a clear and convincing manner the enormity of the mistakes he made. Where Mr. Weaver finds Dr. Branden self-aggrandizing, I find him truthful, factual, and positive in his assessments. Where Mr. Weaver finds Dr. Branden a "prisoner of lightness" in his biography, I find his memoir a courageous, intimate, and brilliant commentary on the deeper (and to date more ignored) aspects of the Objectivist political-intellectual-philosophical movement.

This powerfully written book was, admittedly, somewhat ruthless in its appraisal of his relationships with Ayn Rand and those around her, but until now Dr. Branden had never publicly responded to 20 years of mud-slinging and innuendos about his contribution to and involvement with Objectivism. The book can only be fully evaluated and appreciated in the context of the circumstances giving rise to its origin. Dr. Branden has written something about intellectual history from a unique vantage point. Mr. Weaver somewhat grudgingly acknowledges, "I'm in awe of Branden's achievement in courageously and often movingly bearing witness to so intimate and vast a range of personal experience."

Of all the falsehoods in the review about Dr. Branden, perhaps none is more astonishing than Mr. Weaver's statement toward the end of the piece that the ultimate conclusion of Dr. Branden's book is that, in their search and need for ecstasy, "people should do whatever turns them on." Whether they want religion or sex or drugs or _____, "do it and don't look back." I have never heard Dr. Branden, in his voluminous writings or in person, ever take the position which Mr. Weaver characterizes in essence as "go ahead and do just what makes you feel good."

Robert W. Smiley, Jr.
Los Angeles, CA

Mr. Smiley is a trustee of the Reason Foundation. —Eds.

PAUL H. WEAVER TAKES the easy way in his harsh review of Nathaniel Branden's *Judgment Day* and essentially misses the point. Since Branden is very harsh on himself and revealing, it is easy to attack him with his own testimony; but his book is about honesty, not what a great guy he is. When he told Rand the truth, she tried to crucify him. Her world required lies. Branden had some important responsibility for that. After the break it imploded on her. Ironically, the validity of the basic principles of her philosophy didn't matter, for they weren't applied.

After "judgment day," practically everybody got what he or she deserved. Branden became the effective champion of self-esteem and personal autonomy and invented and refined the sentence-completion technique, which is to psychotherapy what the wheel is to transportation. A psychotherapeutic technique of his even more important, because it is more basic, is his honesty. As a therapist, he tells you what he really thinks and feels. This memoir is an extension of that.

Now Branden is becoming a champion of an ecstatic state of consciousness, but he never says people "should do whatever turns them on." He gives examples of behaviors that try to fulfill this need; he

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doesn't necessarily endorse their means.

Branden tries to be completely honest. Not being God, he doesn't completely succeed. If we are lucky, there will be another book to complement this one.

Brant Gaede
Park Ridge, NJ

Mr. Weaver replies: Contrary to these letters, it is no misrepresentation of *Judgment Day* to say, as I did in my review, that in the book's closing pages Branden tries to glorify himself and sanitize his tragic relationship with Ayn Rand by asserting a human need for an "ecstatic state of consciousness" and a corresponding ethic of "whatever turns you on." I might, however, have made it clearer as to which things Branden says explicitly and which things he implies. He's explicit when he advocates ecstasy and implicit about the whatever-turns-you-on stuff.

Having described the need for ecstasy, he argues that people should satisfy it. For example, he reports that when he broke with Rand, he acknowledged a need for the ecstasy he'd been getting from her and made sure the need was met in new ways.

In the course of this discussion, Branden lists some of the ways in which people achieve the ecstatic consciousness he advocates: love affairs, war or battle, religion, drugs, and athletics. It's a list that cries out for ethical comment—morally and existentially, these are a diverse and problematic bunch of pastimes. But Branden offers no comment. He doesn't say that as pathways to ecstasy, love and religion and athletics might be preferable to war and drugs. He doesn't say that the ecstasy of drugs might be a self-destructive chimera. He doesn't say that if war is the only thing that turns you on, maybe you'll have to forget about ecstasy. By this silence he suggests that in his opinion, war, drugs, and love are all good for people who can get off on them.

It's no accident that Branden ignores the moral issues raised by his list. For one thing, as anyone who's read Nietzsche will understand, ecstasy isn't a moral or prudential passion; the only ethic it acknowledges is the rule of Whatever Turns You On. Moreover, as I said in my review, Branden is talking about ecstasy, not because he wants to discuss ethics or psychology, but because he wants to end his book on a note of self-glorification. The whatever-turns-you-on ethic provides the context that enables him to get offstage in a warm, hazy glow of The Way We Were and Aren't I Great?

Sheenway Shines

Coincidentally, I read REASON for the first time while in Washington, D.C., attending a summer institute whose theme was "Restructuring the Schools: What Does It Mean?" I found Craig Collins's article ("The Wizard of Watts," Aug./Sept.) very timely because it clearly illustrated what a person with a vision of education can do to make a difference. Dolores Sheen is to be commended for the creativity, dedication, and determination she has to keep Sheenway School open. Hers is a nontraditional program; the learning components have been structured to make the students understand the school setting is also a community setting. By sharing learning experiences and responsibilities the students have an enriched educational opportunity.

It is indeed sad that Sheen has such a financial struggle and feels that she cannot apply for state or federal monies. Although it is understood that there must be regulations and guidelines with granted monies, it should also be possible to have some programmatic autonomy. Traditional schooling is not working for many children; nontraditional schools should have a chance to strive and survive.

Mary G. Bennett
Irvington, NJ

IT WAS HEARTENING to read of Dolores Sheen's Sheenway School. Does the school accept cash donations; if so, could you provide their mailing address?

Arne J. Almquist
Denton, TX

A number of readers asked the same question. Contributions may be sent to: Sheenway School, 10101 S. Broadway, Los Angeles, CA 90013.—Eds.

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Risking Choice

Auto insurance is such a mess in so many states that a few may be ready to try something drastic: giving drivers a little freedom. A bill that has been introduced in half a dozen state legislatures would allow consumers to choose between no-fault and liability insurance. Co-author Jeffrey O'Connell, the University of Virginia law professor who helped introduce the concept of no-fault insurance in 1964, says the proposal would reduce costs significantly.

The bill is a response to the complaint that mandatory no-fault systems such as those in New York and Michigan force drivers to give up their right to sue in the event of an accident. To O'Connell's dismay, that concern has led many states to dilute their no-fault systems by allowing litigation when damages exceed a certain level. Under the choice plan, drivers can either opt for less expensive no-fault coverage or pay more for liability insurance and retain the ability to seek damages in court. "The two systems will compete on both price and quality," O'Connell says.

Ken Hacker of the American Insurance Association (AIA) estimates that the plan would reduce the average premium by about 19 percent, since most people would prefer no-fault insurance if given the choice. In Kentucky, the only state with a dual system, fewer than 10 percent of drivers request liability coverage.

The choice bill has been considered in six states where insurance premiums are among the highest in the nation: California, Arizona, Nevada, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. The legislatures in California, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware have yet to vote on the plan. The bill failed in Arizona and Nevada, but O'Connell expects it to be reintroduced. "The whole thing is getting so outrageously expensive that people are desperate to cut costs," he says.

Some people are so desperate, in fact, that they're willing to go a step further than O'Connell and abolish compulsory car insurance altogether. A key legislator in South Carolina, where residents pay a bigger share of their income for car insurance than in any other state, has given up on mere tinkering. State Rep. Robert

Franks a Lot

Conrad, The Winner

Political scientists have long argued that Congress's franking privilege—the right to send out "free" mailings to constituents—is a taxpayer subsidy for reelection campaigns. A recent study by Common Cause tends to confirm that position.

Looking at the 1987-1988 Congress, Common Cause found that the 27 senators up for reelection in 1988 spent an average of 48 cents per household on franked mailings—55 percent more than senators whose terms expire later and 220 percent more than the six Senators who chose to retire in 1988. The House of Representatives does not require members to report franking expenses.

Top Ten Frankers

Senator	Reelection	Cost per household
Kent Conrad (D-N.D.)	No	$1.27
Malcolm Wallop (R-Wyo.)	Yes	1.13
Frank Mukowski (R-Ark.)	No	1.10
John Melcher (D-Mont.)	Yes	1.09
Chic Hecht (R-Nev.)	Yes	.94
Larry Pressler (R-S.D.)	No	.92
Ted Stevens (R-Alaska)	No	.90
John Chafee (R-R.I.)	Yes	.81
Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.)	No	.79
William Roth (R-Del.)	Yes	.78

Source: Common Cause

Four senators reported no franked mass mailings in 1987-1988: Jake Garn (R-Utah), Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kans.), and Warren Rudman (R-N.H.). None of them was up for reelection in 1988. David Boren (D-Okla.) and Pete Wilson (R-Calif.) reported minimal franking expenses (less than one-half cent per household). Wilson was up for reelection, but as the author of a bill that would limit the Senate's franking budget, he couldn't spend as lavishly as his colleagues.

TERRI KLASS

A. Kohn, chairman of the House Insurance Subcommittee, would like to allow drivers the choice of not buying insurance at all. Eleven states have no mandatory insurance laws but restrict the types of coverage that are available. In 1987, premiums were below the national average in nine of the states where insurance is optional.

Although he does not support scrapping mandatory insurance, O'Connell recognizes the idea's appeal. "When you begin to require insurance, you get into all kinds of regulatory problems," he says. Problems like mandating arbitrary rate rollbacks, forcing the insurance industry to monitor compliance, and making good drivers subsidize bad ones through reinsurance funds.

Moreover, O'Connell says, "the tort system makes insurance so expensive that requiring it becomes impossible. People flout the law. It becomes almost a repeat of Prohibition." In South Carolina, for example, some 27 percent of drivers are uninsured. AIA's Hacker says uninsured drivers are especially common in inner cities, where incomes are low and coverage is expensive. He estimates half of Philadelphia's drivers disobey Pennsylvania's mandatory insurance law.

Despite the problems, neither O'Connell, who believes costs can be controlled by limiting litigation, nor Hacker, whose group supports an optional system, expects to see mandatory insurance disappear. One of the main obstacles: Trial lawyers are vehemently opposed to anything that might reduce their fees, and when they're not contributing to election campaigns, they're busy serving in state legislatures.

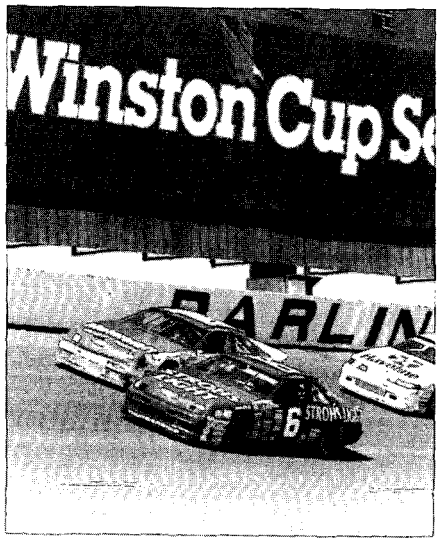
—Jacob Sullum

Speech Lessons

An obscure Supreme Court decision regarding plastic kitchenware may have as great an impact on free speech as the more famous flag-burning decision. But while the Court's decision in the flag-burning case expanded the right of political speech, its decision in the so-called Tupperware case narrowed the protection given to commercial speech. And now activists in Congress are preparing to take advantage of this decision with restrictions on tobacco and alcohol advertising.

Just days before it announced that flag burning is protected by the Constitution, the Court, in *Todd Fox et al.* v. *Board of Trustees of the State University of New York*, upheld a SUNY ban on commercial activity on campus. The case began when several students at the SUNY-Cortland campus invited a saleswoman to demonstrate Tupperware-like cookware in one of their dormitory rooms. Campus police somehow found out about the demonstration and arrested the woman for trespassing and soliciting without a license. The students sued the university, claiming the rule violated their rights of free speech.

By a 6-3 majority, the Court upheld the restriction, narrowing the constitutional protection of free speech. The Court had previously held that government can restrict commercial speech only if the restriction involves a substantial government interest, directly advances that interest, and is no more extensive than necessary. But in *Fox*, the Court ruled that the restriction need only be reasonable.



Do Winston Cup auto races cause kids to smoke?

NBC News President Michael Gartner decried the decision in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed. "'Least restrictive' is something that can be proved; if you assert that something is least restrictive, I am free to prove you wrong by finding a method that restricts even less. 'Reasonable' is a mush word; it's a characterization that can't be proved, a word that allows all kinds of restraints."

Others agree that the ruling has impact far beyond commercial activities on campus. "Those who thought they could use the First Amendment to fight alcohol or tobacco ad bans...are the clear losers," says constitutional scholar Bruce Fein. "This...opens the door to ad-ban proposals."

Indeed, the ruling gives momentum to the Protect Our Children from Cigarettes Act of 1989. Under the guise of safeguarding impressionable young minds, the bill would ban the use of models, scenes, logos, and color in tobacco advertising. It would also forbid ads within 500 feet of schools or in sports arenas, effectively ending tobacco sponsorship of sporting events or concerts.

ACLU Legislative Counsel Barry Lynn argues that if the bill becomes law, "it will be illegal to hold the Kool Jazz Festival; it will be unlawful to produce a baseball cap with the word WINSTON on it;...it will be unlawful for a bus with a cigarette advertisement displayed on its side to be driven near a school."

—Charles Oliver

"RICO affronts our system's sense of fairness because it is a particularly telling example of the problems inherent in all conspiracy laws. The way to deal with stock manipulators is to prosecute them for violating the securities regulations; the way to deal with hoodlums is to prosecute them for committing crimes, not talking about them."

—Unsigned editorial,
The Los Angeles Times

DOZIER MOBLEY

BALANCE SHEET

Assets

Remarkable Recovery. The economy chugs along wonderfully, despite all predictions of recession. Every time the data indicate a downward trend, the next month's numbers point up. One drawback to the good news: It lets politicians—and the public—blather about drugs, child care, and sex scandals. Push unemployment up a few notches and we wouldn't be hearing much about crack.

Pole Vault. Poland seems to show that a Communist country can liberalize, even democratize, if it has enough institutional counterweights to the party—in this case the church, the union, and, yes, even the army. Whether its coalition government can unscramble the economy is the trickier question.

Eastern Values. Japan's arcane distribution system starts to crack up, confounding the Western notion that gouging consumers is as Japanese as sushi. Discount stores, mostly homegrown, open in the suburbs. Many offer foreign goods. Sales run $4.2 billion a year and are growing fast. Once-hostile bureaucrats relax enforcement of the law limiting retailer size. As *Fortune* puts it, "The Japanese are traveling overseas in record numbers, seeing for themselves that not everyone pays $40 for a melon."

Hungary for Freedom. One little rip in the Iron Curtain, and suddenly the whole thing looks about to disintegrate. Some 100,000 East Germans are expected to emigrate to West Germany this year—mostly through Hungary's newly open frontier. Refugees from Third World Communist states find Hungary a hospitable place to stay, as do thousands of Romanians, prompting the Ceausescu government to build a seven-foot fence to keep them in.

Liabilities

Deng Heap. As China continues its crackdown, the Bush administration privately adopts the Chinese line that the media exaggerated the importance of the protests and the massacre. High-level contacts continue, contrary to announced policy. China's $780 million in World Bank loans—held up since June—will likely be restored, as will sales of military goods. Chinese refugees find little sympathy at U.S. embassies; many turn to France or West Germany instead.

Bankrupt Policy. Congress bails out the S&Ls at a cost of at least $150 billion—"enough money," writes P. J. O'Rourke, "to pay for a New York City taxi ride from earth to the planet Uranus and back thirty-six times, including tip"—but refuses to reform deposit insurance, the source of the problem. And the bailout, notes economist Allan Meltzer, will leave the feds with loads of foreclosed land and buildings, ripe for all sorts of backroom deals.

Cable Snit. The General Accounting Office calls for "reregulation" of cable TV, because fees rose 25 percent in two years—four times the inflation rate. The National League of Cities whines about cable operators' "monopolistic powers" but doesn't offer to give up cities' power to grant those monopolies. The *Wall Street Journal* rightly dubs the desired regulation "pseudoregulation," noting that the Consumer Federation of America estimates that competition could halve monthly fees.

Burmanent Record. Burma, renamed Myanmar, arrests opposition leaders, expels foreign correspondents, and cuts international telex and phone lines. The U.S. embassy reports "commonplace" torture and beatings of political dissidents. The State Department says recent actions "cast serious doubts on the Burmese government's repeated promises to hold free and fair elections by May of 1990." Oh really.

—Virginia I. Postrel

Healthy Alternative

"Look for a need," businessman Rob Worley, Sr., often advised his son on starting his own company. So Rob Worley, Jr., listened with attentive ears when a desperate, terminally ill man called Bruce Williams's VoiceNet talk radio program to ask for advice.

The man needed money for medicine, so he had approached his insurance company and some local banks to see if they would give him some cash for his life insurance policy. But federal law prohibited both the insurance companies and banks from doing so.

After 14 years in the insurance business, Worley Jr. could see his opportunity to fulfill a need. He found out that, on average, each insurance company received four calls per week from people who wanted to sell their life insurance policies. Worley told his father, and they both went to work.

Their Albuquerque company, Living Benefits Inc., opened its doors late last year, after three years of research and legal fees. The company pays terminally ill patients cash—55 percent to 70 percent of face value—to be named the beneficiary of their life insurance policies.

Without money from someone like Rob Worley, dying patients with large life insurance policies often have little choice but to let payments lapse in order to cover medical expenses. They thereby forfeit the policies' benefits altogether. And if they do keep up payments, no one can benefit from their precautions until after they die.

Since its inception, Living Benefits has helped about 20 people dying from cancer and AIDS live their last few months more bearably. Some have bought medicine or paid for medical care. Others have gone on dream vacations to Hawaii or Europe.

In January, however, nine insurance companies and New Mexico's insurance commissioner, Ted Knight, threatened to legislate Living Benefits out of business. Worried that the company "has an economic interest in death," as one official

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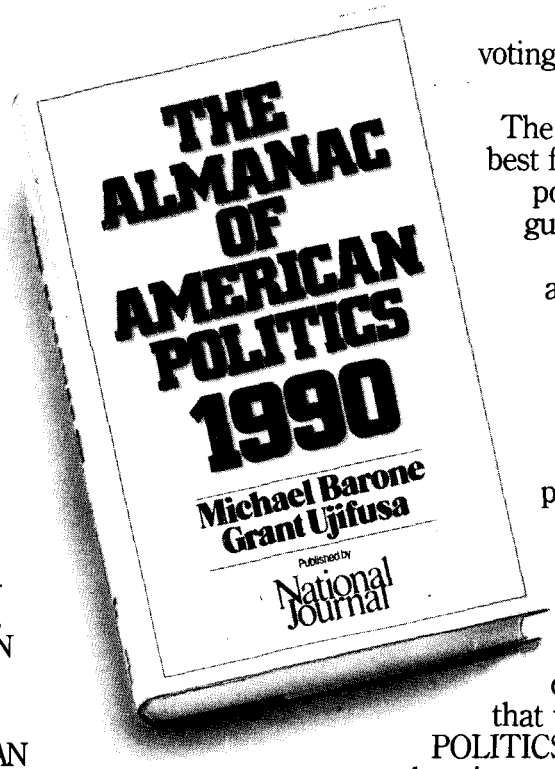

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with the American Council of Life Insurance put it, these civic crusaders sought to protect life insurance policyholders from predatory profit seekers. Worley eventually won over Knight and the state legislature by showing them the stringent self-regulations to which Living Benefits subjects itself.

The insurance companies are now scurrying to grab a piece of the pie. Many now offer accelerated-death-benefit policies that pay a percentage of face value to those holders who acquire a previously specified illness, are diagnosed as having a terminal illness, or enter a nursing home. All three of the new types of policies cater to previously unrecognized desires. Two years ago a terminally ill patient was simply out of luck.

The established insurance companies had overlooked this need and tried to cover their backsides with legislation. Federal and state governments were all too willing to help.

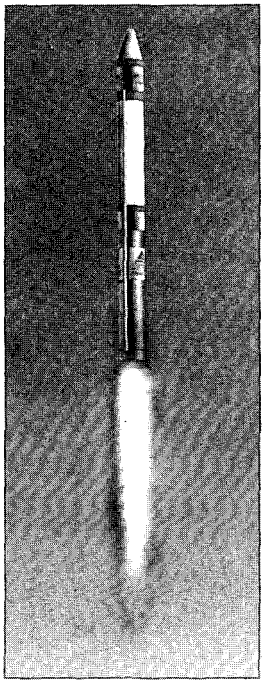
In this case, however, the consumers held on to their freedom of choice. Rob Worley's father, beaming with pride, says "the customers, of course, think we're the greatest thing since sliced bread."

—Nicolas M. Hoffman

Burning Rubber

It was to be one small hop for a rocket, one giant leap for private space transportation.

After taking off from Vandenberg Air Force Base, the Koopman Express would ascend to an altitude of 120 miles and proceed west, splashing down in the Pacific Ocean about 150 miles from California's coast. The entiresuborbital flight, scheduled for late September, was expected to last about 15 minutes, but it would demonstrate the effectiveness of the first commercially developed vehicle ever launched into space.



The Koopman Express, built without subsidies, takes off.
(Artist's Rendering)

The 58-foot, 16-ton rocket was designed and produced by the American Rocket Co., a 4-year-old firm based in Camarillo, California, entirely without government subsidy. It was named for AMROC founder George A. Koopman, who died in a car accident two months before the scheduled launch. Koopman dreamed of providing reliable, low-cost launch services to customers frustrated by the expense and delay associated with public-sector operations such as NASA and the European Space Agency. He wanted AMROC to be "the Federal Express of space transportation." Since none of the existing launch systems was up to the task, AMROC had to design its own rocket.

In contrast with the rockets produced under government space and defense programs, the AMROC launcher had to be cost-effective. "Our concept is to build it simple and build it cheap," says AMROC engineer Paul Estey. The result is a hybrid rocket producing 75,000 pounds of thrust, powered by a combination of liquid oxygen and synthetic rubber. Unlike rockets that run exclusively on solid or liquid fuel, the AMROC launcher can be stopped and started; the design prevents explosions and uncontrolled burning. The launcher's propellents are nontoxic, and its exhaust—which consists chiefly of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and water—is safer than emissions from most other rockets.

Not incidentally, the hybrid rocket is cheap enough to produce that AMROC expects to launch payloads for one-third the price charged by government-supported operations. Launchers are assembled virtually from scratch, so the company has extensive control over costs. After three years and $30 million of research and development, AMROC is geared up to produce rockets assembly-line style—about 100 a year eventually.

The company has already attracted its first two customers. The Koopman Express was to carry an undisclosed Strategic Defense Initiative experiment and the prototype of a "para-shield" for re-entry vehicles developed at MIT.

In addition to the suborbital rocket, which provides up to 10 minutes of weightlessness for experiments, AMROC intends to offer multiple-motor launchers capable of carrying satellites into low earth orbit. Company president James C. Bennett says the first of the larger rockets, which can carry payloads of up to 4,000 pounds, will be launched about six months after customers are signed up.

Still dependent on government launch sites such as Vandenberg, AMROC would like to see a completely private transportation system. Bennett points to the Koopman Express as evidence that the launch business can be disentangled from government. "This is the beginning of the commercial space transportation industry," he says, "and I expect it to go on forever."

—Jacob Sullum

FYI

For more information about groups or individuals mentioned in this month's Trends:

Embattled Boatman:
Center for Civil Rights
107 Second Street, NE
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 546-6045

Private Rocket:
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847 Flynn Road
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Park Service Runs Entrepreneur Aground

All Wilfred "Junie" Allick wanted to do was to make a living from sailing. But the National Park Service appears eager to stop Allick from pursuing his trade.

Allick owns the *North Star*, the only nonmotorized charter boat in the U.S. Virgin Islands. In the late 1960s, Allick began to offer excursions to the Buck Island Reef National Monument, a popular tourist destination one-and-a-half miles away from the territorial capital of St. Croix.

In 1978 the National Park Service required charter boat operators to obtain permits to sail to Buck Island. Shortly thereafter, the Service began an "attrition" policy designed to reduce the number of charter boat operators who offered excursions to the island, claiming that "predatory price cutting" meant that operators could not make fair profits. In 1978, 23 operators offered trips to the island; today, 7 do. Not only has the service restricted competition, it has also allowed those who have licenses to get more. Today, one Park Service-approved licensee has 12 boats; another has 6. All the licensees are from the mainland United States; none are native Virgin Islanders.

Allick was originally given a license in 1979, but in 1981 he took his 90-year-old boat ashore for extensive repairs. The Park Service allowed him to suspend service until February 1982. Because Allick was three weeks late in getting his antique boat seaworthy, the Park Service suspended his license and has not renewed it. Today, Allick can only sail to Buck Island if he does not charge for his services.

After losing his license, Allick's income fell drastically. But unlike other native Virgin Islanders, Allick did not abandon the sea. Today, he struggles to earn a living in the trade he has practiced for the past 25 years.

On August 14 the Landmark Legal Foundation's Center for Civil Rights, a market-oriented public interest law firm, filed suit in the U.S. District Court in Washington asking that Allick be given a license and that the National Park Service abandon the "attrition" policy. Allick's attorney, Clint Bolick, sees the case as one that will help confirm the notion that government cannot capriciously force businesspeople to abandon their trade.

"If Junie Allick was on welfare and his check was denied, he would face far more due process than he would in this case," Bolick says. As of press time, the Park Service had not responded to Allick's suit. Informal efforts by Allick's congressman, Rep. Ron de Lugo (D-V.I.), to persuade the Park Service to issue a permit had also not proven successful.

—Martin Morse Wooster

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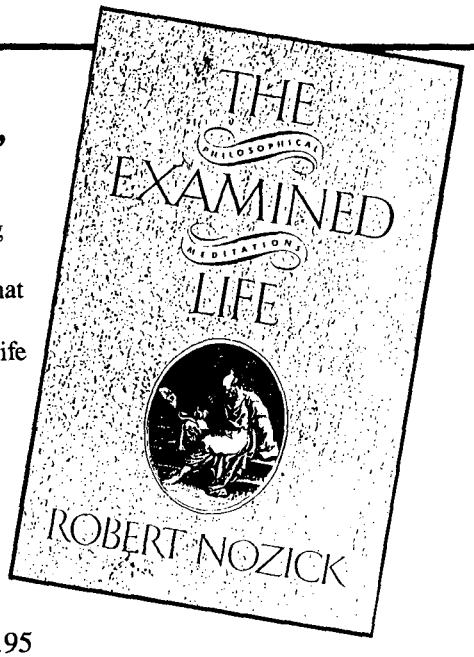

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BRICKBATS

In the African country of Benin, Matthew B'Yoa was recently fined for destroying the country's air force. Who is B'Yoa? An international terrorist? An antigovernment rebel? No, not quite. He's an avid golfer. B'Yoa had just teed off when Benin's four-plane air force made a low-level flyby over the golf course. B'Yoa's ball crashed through the cockpit of one plane, sending it crashing into the other three. All four planes were destroyed. And you thought golf was boring.

John Pittman has brought a little bit of country living into the city. It all started when officials in Carmel, Indiana, ruled that Pittman couldn't put an office building on land that he owned. They thought the neighborhood already had plenty of office buildings. Since he couldn't put offices there, Pittman turned his land into a hog farm. Now, all of the occupants in the nearby office buildings can enjoy the, uh, *aroma* of farm life without ever leaving the city.

Earlier this year, a police dragnet descended upon Quezon City, Philippines, hauling people off the streets, yanking them out of cars and hotel rooms, and pulling them out of restaurants. Who were the police rounding up? Communists insurgents trying to overthrow the government? No. Allies of former President Marcos? Nope, the police were after smokers. Quezon City has passed a tough new ordinance banning smoking virtually everywhere, even in private automobiles. Violators face jail time and stiff fines. In the first three days after the law took effect, police arrested more than 300 felons, including quite a few out-of-towners who didn't even know smoking was illegal.

A police car with lights flashing led the way. Following it were about two dozen young women in spike heels and leather miniskirts. No, it wasn't a parade honoring Rob Lowe. It was Washington, D.C., police at work. At about 1:30 A.M., the police rounded up all the ladies of the night they could find and herded the hookers across the district line into Virginia. (Although the women are streetwalkers, a 1.4 mile march down 14th Street is normally not part of the job.) Virginia authorities were furious. Fumed Rep. Stan Parrish, "We get all the sludge, all the garbage, most of the prisoners, now their prostitutes." Maybe Washington police just took that "Virginia is for lovers" slogan a little too seriously?

Poor New Yorkers. They have so much to contend with: Crime is rampant, the subway system is a joke, and Ed Koch is mayor. Now they face the possibility that their favorite blankets may be confiscated by the police. Authorities have placed a limit on the size of the blankets people may bring with them to concerts in Central Park. Any blanket that exceeds the limit will be seized by police. It's nice to know that the removal of a few blankets is all that is needed to make Central Park safe for people to visit.

The Jack-Webb-Is-Spinning-in-His-Grave Department. A Miami police officer was suspended after breaking wind into a police radio. In Los Angeles another policeman was suspended for flatulating in front of two handcuffed prisoners and telling them to "Check this out."

No one can accuse Oklahoma City police of neglecting their duties, although some may question their powers of observation. Over three days, the police ticketed an illegally parked car seven times. But the cops who lifted the windshield wiper to stick the tickets on the window failed to see the man slumped over the dashboard. Finally, a passerby noticed the man and called the police. This time the cops opened up the car and got the man out. He had been dead the entire time.

—Mark Edward Crane

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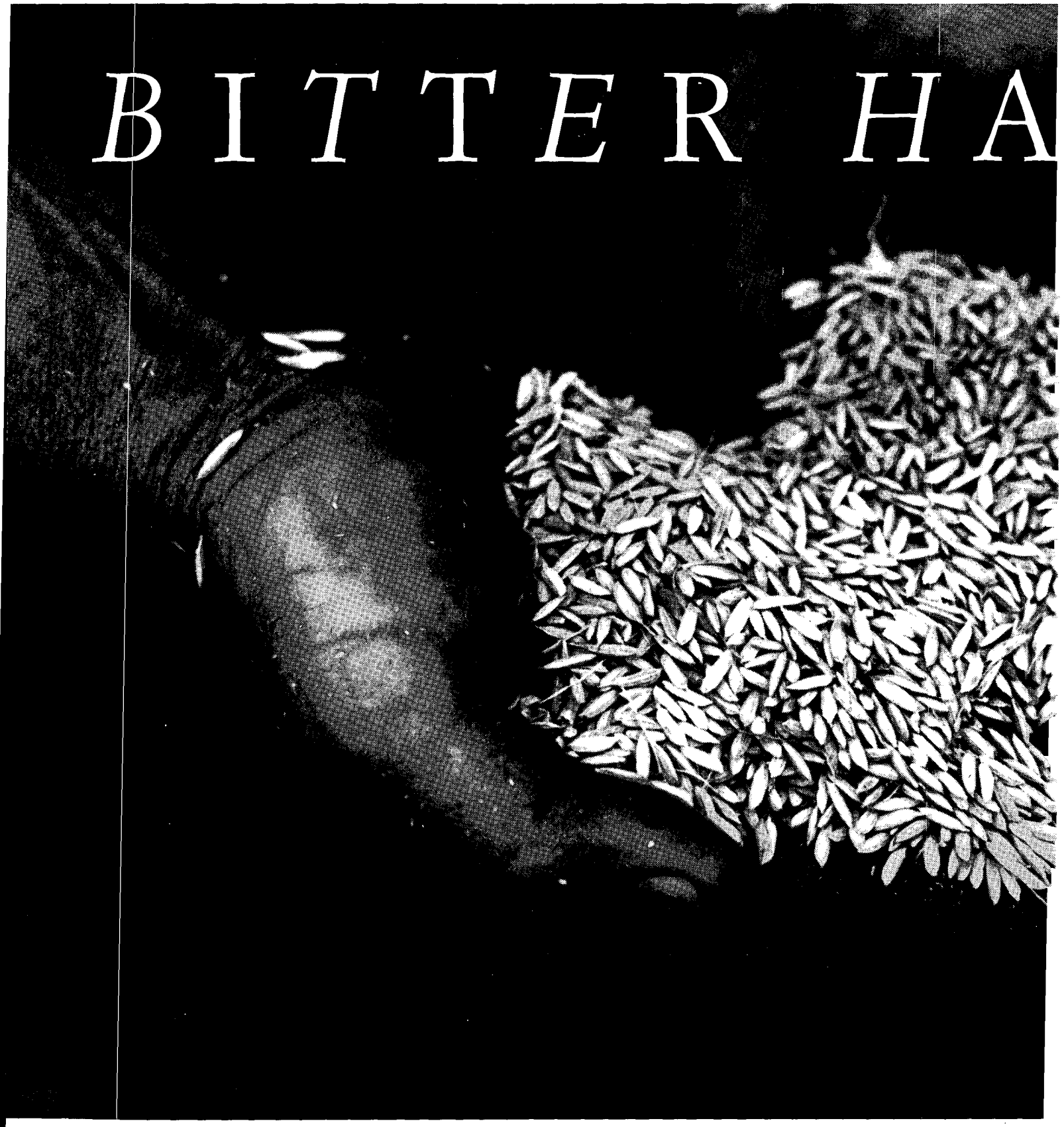

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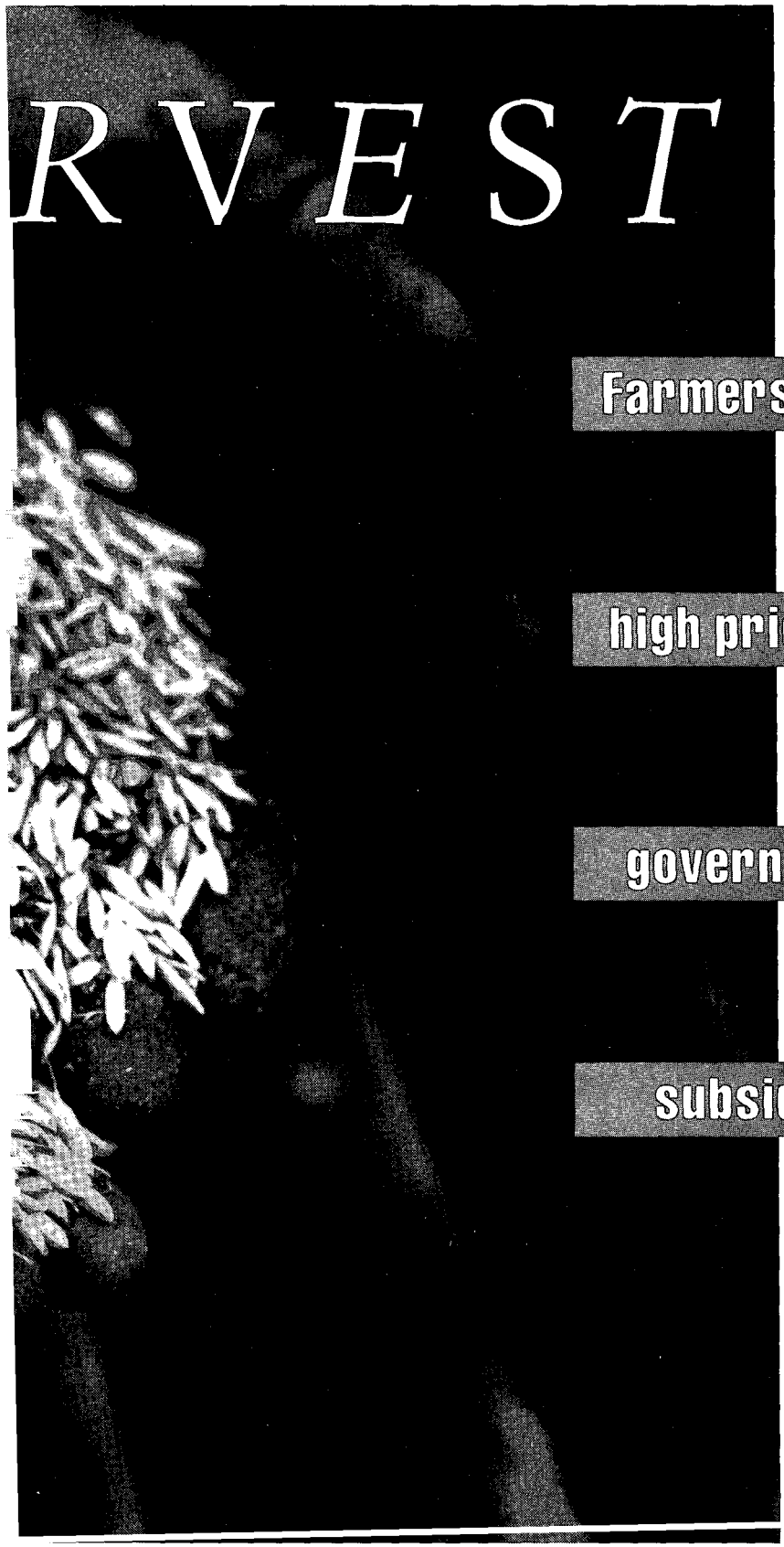

Farmers pay a high price for government subsidies

It is impossible not to be impressed with the economic productivity of American farmers. Less than 3 percent of our population produces enough food and other agricultural products to provision several hundred million people around the globe. But equally inspiring over the years has been the cultural output of our farmyards.

Agriculture is an occupation like no other. It fosters private discipline and self-reliance in ways not easily replicated by office work or assembly lines. Each independently owned farm is like a miniature frontier, where individuals must face nature, solve problems alone, and rely on both their wits and their strength to earn a living. Farming is a supremely entrepreneurial activity—self-employment with special character-building twists.

BY KARL ZINSMEISTER

One of the remarkable things about American farm culture has been its ability to adapt and apply the miracles of modernism and technology to achieve a productive revolution without destroying older ethics and living patterns. Farming has become very much a high-tech industry, with advanced equipment, computerized information, and lots of science in place. Yet even with the bioengineered seeds and the big bank deals, most American farmers have retained remarkably simple, straightforward values. They continue to get up every morning at 6 A.M.; they work hard; they stay pretty humble; common sense and stamina are in abundant supply; family ties are strong, psychotherapy bills low.

Farm families have long replenished our society with sturdy lessons in self-reliance and realism. Millions of Americans value the agricultural sector for that. But there is a perverse danger to be avoided in any embrace of family farming. Farms must stand on their own strengths. If they are adopted as public charities, lap-fed on fatty government largess, they will cease to exist as the independent, strong, and diverse social institutions that inspired us in the first place. Farmers do not make good pets.

M. E. Bradford is an enormous man, the son and grandson of cattle ranchers. Himself, he is a philosopher and writer, a proponent of southern agrarianism, the intellectual school descended from Thomas Jefferson's argument that free and self-governing small farmers are the very roots and stem of American democracy. "The regular difficulties of agricultural life," Bradford has written, have "very positive effects in the formation of character." Indeed, he concludes, "the most important crop of a sound agriculture" is "solid freemen."

Rice and cattle grower Loy Sneary fears subsidies have cost farmers self-respect.

America's agricultural sector, Bradford argues, will always be built around the family farm and exist somewhat uneasily outside the nation's industrial structure. "Commercial, corporate America wants a proletariat—a wealthy one, mind you, but pliable. The thorny individualism of independent farmers—who have never surrendered a sort of artisan like autonomy, with whom many separate negotiations and personal contracts are necessary—has always sat uneasily with corporate business solutions," he says.

This aspect of agricultural life has to be interpreted carefully. The distinctiveness of farm communities is often sugar-coated and crudely romanticized. "We've got farmers who are drunks, farmers who won't pay their bills, won't work, you name it," states Missouri corn grower Blake Hurst.

"Farmers have been patronized forever as hearty souls, but there are as many whiners there as anywhere," argues one Farm Bureau official. Even genuine yeoman independence can, and occasionally does, spill over into an unproductive cussedness. Several of the more venomous populist demagogues of past and present have sprung from farm-state bases.

Just the same, there are some valuable differences in rural life. Earlier this year, American Farm Bureau President Dean Kleckner worried over the fact that this country's urban majority is increasingly cut off from the land, from mechanical processes, from any first-hand experience of the relationship of human beings to the natural world. "There are people out there who think milk comes out of a carton and peas out of cans," as one observer put it.

This alienation of many Americans from the physical universe has sometimes led to morbid and exaggerated fears (for instance, about food safety). Or to unrealistic expectations of the possible (like simultaneous demands for no pesticides, no migrant labor, lower prices, more salad bars, and heaven forbid anyone should ever find a horny caterpillar in their lettuce). Occasionally it results in Luddism, damaging ignorance, or just simple kookiness (as in the movement which urges that cows be pastured where they have ocean views). If an effete fussiness has crept into American life, certainly farms continue to be great places to learn to repair an engine or figure a cubic volume, to discover how to tell a ground wire from one that will stop your heart, to develop the ability to keep a sick animal alive, even to find out how a fellow can get by without a hairdryer.

The Priesmeyers are a farm family. Eldest son A.J. is a small, wiry man with sharp-featured sunburnt good looks and an outgoing directness. His brother Terry is fair and

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burlier, a classic quiet and thoughtful younger sibling. There is an obvious bond between the brothers, a genuine friendship to match the close-quarters working relationship. A third brother, Lester, is younger, unmarried, and inclined to do a little more running around before he pulls on his farm business cap for good. But three-and-three-quarters Priesmeyer men are already hard at the task of growing rice, and it's taken some hustling to size up their El Campo, Texas, farm to support four families.

For Arthur Priesmeyer, hunting wildlife on the family's land is a side benefit of farming.

Arthur Priesmeyer, Sr., clearly admired by his sons, is the man at the top. He is roaring around, dust flying, in a massive earthmover when I meet him, regrading and leveling a rice field. "He likes to drive anything with Caterpillar on it," A.J. says, winking at me. In the course of expanding his operation to its current base of 1,200 acres, Arthur stepped in a few of the pitfalls that swallowed a lot of farmers in the early 1980s. Some land bought on credit with no down payment has scurried off into the arms of creditors.

But the family has made do. "We're shade tree mechanics," says A.J., indicating they do most equipment repairs themselves right at the farm. Their wives work in town, supplementing the family income. The Priesmeyers buy most of their farm machinery used, and the old man has a reputation for having skinned more than one auctioneer. "The way we look at it," Terry explains, "we can buy a neighbor's 80-acre farm for the cost of one $75,000 tractor." And land is what a four-family farming operation needs.

In any event, the tight finances haven't prevented the Priesmeyers from enjoying meaningful lives. Day long, kids wearing grimy grins and scrub haircuts putter barefoot in the powdery dust of the yard, circulating through shifting groups of relatives who come to gather around the kitchen table. In this farm family, as in many, much of the essential business takes place there—"the marketing gets done where the electricity runs," goes a common saying.

A.J. keeps a 1946 single-engine airplane with deep vee wings, a dual tail, and gorgeous showgirl curves, flying it out of a barn for pure fun. And the whole lot are hunting and firearms nuts. Piles of deer antlers and other trophies lie around the house, including two stuffed bobcats father and son shot on the farm a few years past. The one vacation every year takes the family to Colorado to camp and stalk elk.

This passion for wildlife and the outdoors has led to some very unconventional farming practices. With its flowing water and heavy grain yields, rice farming attracts birds and animals in great number. To avoid pilfering losses, most growers keep their boundary land clear of nesting and hiding spots. The Priesmeyers, on the other hand, have for years let their turnrows, canal banks, and hedges grow up in lush wildness. Scrub trees, junglegrass, ducksalad, hemps, hedges, smartweed, and bushes of all sorts flourish improbably.

There is a price to be paid for this—blackbirds can easily destroy 15 percent of a crop, even when farmers fight them off with shotguns. But there is also a benefit—one that helps make agriculture a worthwhile way of life for these men: The farm is rich with geese, ducks, ibises, dowitchers, doves, and pheasants, plus the bobcats and foxes that feed off them. There are deer. There are cottonmouths, and even a few alligators, in the drainage basins.

The Mennonite who owns the adjoining farm, with its clear-mowed and sprayed-down field margins, is undoubtedly astonished by this riot of unruly subtropical habitat, but for the Priesmeyers it is a reasonably cheap joy-producing fringe benefit of being a farmer. For most of its practitioners, agriculture has value and importance beyond its ability to provide an income. Part of the compensation is in the fabric of rural living, the satisfactions of owning land, and the freedom to set one's own course. For some there is even a payoff in letting things go to seed.

Some farmers "are willing to forgo their subsidies to get back in society's good graces," says sociologist William Heffernan.

Unfastidious and incautiously fond of guns, Caterpillars, planes, and pheasants as they are, Arthur, A.J., and Terry Priesmeyer are nonetheless impressively resourceful, hardworking, and free-living Americans. As individuals they have tremendous personal vitality, and their family allows a great collective strength. It is very hard to imagine these men beaten down.

Even in a scientific society, those are qualities that count for something.

Even if one accepts the view, dear to many Americans of varied persuasions, that our nation's farms are to be valued for important social contributions, one hard fact remains: Those benefits simply cannot be purchased with money. A half century of copiously flowing funds has not been able to prevent a decline in the size of America's agricultural sector. That shrinkage is powerfully driven by technology—it simply doesn't take many farmers nowadays to produce tremendous bounty—and it is inexorable.

More to the point, as even Bradford acknowledges, "sustained government help...is self-defeating. It saps the very vitality we value." A deep embrace of subsidization, protection, and coddling threatens the loved one with suffocation.

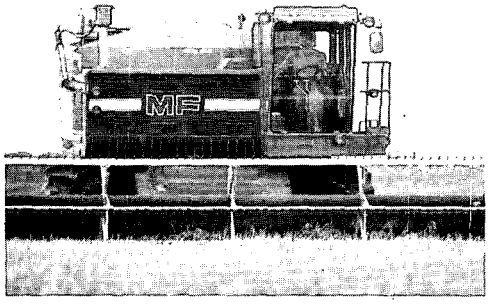
A large portion of government assistance for farmers today can't be considered anything more than welfare (or to be more precise, "workfare"), and it is having many of welfare's characteristic effects. One is dependency. Once you've bought land and equipment counting on the regular check, you're hooked. It's no accident discussions of farm programs often use the image of the addict.

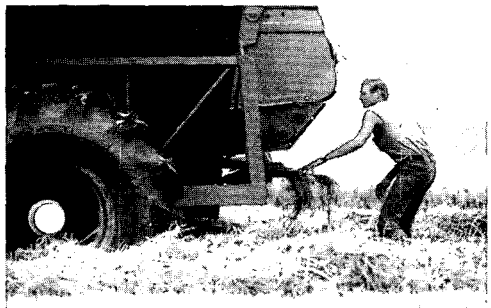
"The programs are 'voluntary,' but the penalties for nonparticipation are so great that a farmer who wishes to be self-reliant is nevertheless virtually forced to sign up," says former Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Don Paarlberg. "This subversion of formerly independent farmers is one of the worst attributes of government farm programs."

Bay City, Texas, farmer Loy Sneary is just one of many who expressed worry to me that the great run-up of farm subsidies during the 1980s has cost farmers a measure of self-respect. University of Missouri sociologist William Heffernan, who has surveyed the attitudes of farmers for years, confirms that the trait traditionally tied most closely to farmers—a strong sense of self-worth—has begun to be eroded by guilt. Heavy costs and unwieldy surpluses in government programs have led some farmers to "see themselves as liabilities." Heffernan reports that some farmers "are willing to forgo their subsidies to get back in society's good graces. Others just want their independence back."

"My wife's father is of German extraction and he keeps up with events there," Blake Hurst says as he drives me around his farm in Tarkio, Missouri. "He tells me the German government pays farmers to keep Bavarian farm houses 'typical,' to keep neat fields along the autobahn, things like that. That seems pretty artificial, even a little humiliating, to me."

The approach of "farm as theme park" also has a foothold in this country. The state of Vermont recently disposed of part of a budget surplus by establishing a special payment to dairy farmers. According to a Farm Bureau official, its general intent was "to keep the barns painted red and the calves in the fields in a state where image is important."





Getting in the harvest is a family affair. Lester Priesmeyer drives the combine (above), while brother Terry cleans straw out of the thresher.

The programs also encourage underhandedness. Schemes like the "Mississippi Christmas Tree," "PIK and roll," and the "Dakota shuffle"—some illegal, some merely unseemly—feature prominently in coffee shop conversations in farm counties these days. The thicket of constantly changing government provisions makes arbitrage, asset shifting, inventory shuffling, and creative bookkeeping not only profitable but necessary.

Sometimes the result is outright scammery. Delaware farmer Charles West recounts the case of a local farmer who had planted more acres of barley than he was allowed. The authorities ordered him to plow under the area that exceeded his allotment. He did. Problem is, he harvested it first, by night. "We had neighbors who saw the combines, and we knew the cab drivers, but he denied it to the bitter end," says West. "We had to have agronomists come in and analyze the plow-under. The whole thing was an embarrassing mess."

Unvarnished fraud is probably pretty rare, but as Paarlberg points out, "farmers talk frankly with equal parts of cynicism, humor and guilt" about even the milder, very common, varieties of fiddling. Yet so long as government programs set the baseline on available returns, most farmers of the major government-regulated crops feel as if they must get a piece of the action.

As Hurst says, "We don't really like accepting subsidies. But if we didn't enroll in government farm programs, our corn would be worth $1.80 a bushel; because we participate, we receive $3.00. Everybody has his price. Now you know ours."

And it is not only on farmers themselves that the government programs have eaten away. The transfer, season after season, of tens of billions of dollars in aid (more, recently, than has gone to food stamp recipients, who are nearly 20 times as numerous) has also changed the public's view of the agricultural sector. Much good feeling has been squandered. If the notion ever roots that agriculture is peopled with free riders, farmers will pay a terrible price.

Already this may be happening. Farm Bureau officials report that in debates over how farms ought to be treated when they are handed down to heirs, they sometimes hear the argument that since government subsidies helped farmers get rich, it's only fair that estate taxes should take a big hunk back at the time of inheritance. Similar logic is increasingly applied

on environmental questions and development issues. Activists argue: "We've been paying farmers all these years. Now we can start demanding they give us some say in how their operations proceed, and how their land is used."

The Agriculture Department's budget was $51 billion last year—more than the total net income of American farmers.

Growing numbers of farmers recognize the grave dangers in the subsidy route. Still, there is a reality rub that mutes their response. As Iowa Cooperative Extension agent Mike Duffy puts it, thousands of midwestern farmers look at their income statements these days and say, "Look, of every $100 profit I made last year, $75 came from Uncle Sam. How can I say the programs hurt me?" Answers to that question, many people who follow farm programs now realize, lie somewhat below the surface.

For one thing, a lot of money spent in the name of tillers actually ends up in the pockets of various hangers-on. The U.S. Department of Agriculture pays generous salaries and benefits to 120,000 full-time employees (there are only about 500,000 full-time farmers in the country). The department's annual budget was $51 billion last year—more than the total net income of American farmers.

Nor is there any reason to assume that the market prices currently supplying 25 percent of our composite farmer's income would stay that low in the absence of government programs. Subsidies create chronic surpluses. These, in turn, depress trading prices. Under a freed-up market in equilibrium, payments to farmers for many agricultural products would be higher than they are today.

Other prices would be about the same. Some would be lower, but even this wouldn't necessarily hurt farmers. Many farm products—such as, dairy products—would be consumed in greater quantities by Americans if prices fell. That obviously would be a nice thing for moderate-income consumers. It would also give growers a chance to gain in increased sales what they gave up in high prices.

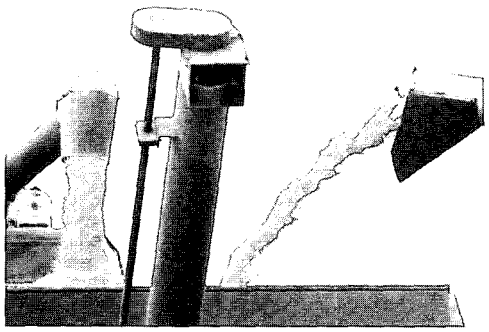
As we pointed out in the first article in this series, there is ample evidence that unsubsidized agriculture can be profitable for farmers—most farm production (beef, pork, chickens, most vegetables, most fruits, minor grains, soybeans) already exists more or less free of government aid. (See "Plowing Under Subsidies," Oct.) Indeed, unentangled sectors tend to be more lucrative. Bankruptcy rates over the last decade have been higher among farmers of program crops than for free-market farmers.

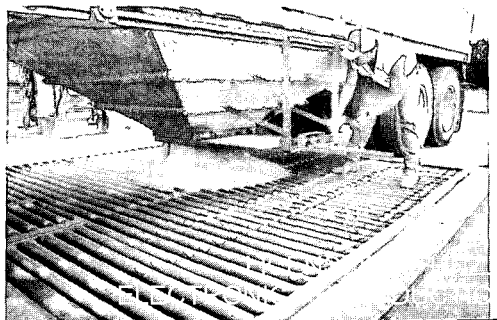
And of course government funds come with a price tag—in interference and surrendered decision-making power. "Other than a few choices in what land we'll use to meet 'set-aside' requirements, we're totally locked in as far as production," says corn grower Hurst. "We make almost no cropping decisions, they're all made for us. We can't drain wet spots or change the location of drainage ditches. The USDA tells us what to plant, how much to plant, where to plant."

Very few Americans realize how utterly fettered and unfree the government-overseen part of our agricultural economy is. There are about 2,800 agricultural counties in this country, and each one has an office of the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, the Ag-police. Every single enrolled farmer must present for approval a marketing plan, multiyear crop rotation reports, detailed field surveys, and so forth. An industry has sprung up just to help farmers understand and comply with the requirements.

"There is only one other organization in the world that has anything like the supply control powers of our Commodity Credit Corporation, and that's the Soviet Union's central planning agency, GOSPLAN," states Robert Thompson, dean of the Purdue University School of Agriculture. European governments, he says, are amazed by the level of grassroots-to-treetops authority the USDA exercises over the farm economy. "For all their love of manipulation and interference in their farm sectors, they couldn't micromanage the way we do if they wanted to."

And American politicians—Republicans and Democrats alike—show no hesitancy in making use of this control network. "It's not just every five years in the farm bill that our politicians tinker with the flow of farm commodities," declares John Hosemann, senior economist of the American Farm Bureau Federation, "they do it by the hour." A vigorous man with no appetite for minced words and a copy of *The Wealth of Nations* on his desk, Hosemann bemoans the constant manipulation of stocks, the annual dart-throw by which target prices are set, and the other





The Priesmeyers dry and store their own rice. Above, rice pours into a truck to go to the dryers. Below, Terry puts rice into a pit on its way to the dryer.

intrusions that prevent farm commodities markets from achieving any long-term balance.

But the constantly changing ground rules are unavoidable, given the assignment. When Congress writes a five-year plan, it just sketches in general outlines, aware that such variables as world economic conditions, weather, and political events will regularly destroy its initial assumptions. To allow for adjustments, Congress gives the secretary of agriculture astonishing powers to reorder his fiefdom. Without question, the agriculture secretary has more personal discretion and authority over his segment of American society than any other cabinet officer. Not even close.

A crop duster keeps a neighboring farm under greater control than the Priesmeyers.

Administratively matching buyers' and sellers' interests as efficiently as markets can would be impossible even under the best of conditions. And U.S. farm policy is further twisted by the confusion of conflicting purposes. Politicians have never decided exactly what they want to accomplish with farm programs. Some measures increase production. Others attempt to hold it down. A costly and confusing tug-of-war is the result.

Centering all this power in one place has another effect: It creates a lobbying explosion. Early on in the life of our farm programs, William Faulkner wrote, "Our economy is not agricultural any longer. Our economy is the federal government. We no longer till in Mississippi cotton fields, but in Washington corridors and Congressional committee rooms." With stakes recently rising into the billions of dollars, influence-mongering has ratcheted up in turn. Many farmers' associations now find that trying to influence the federal programs has become their single most important undertaking.

"If they didn't scream, we didn't worry about them," one individual involved in drafting the Senate version of the 1985 farm bill told me in explaining how bill writers had set priorities. Such a process is ill-suited to most farmers, and custom-made instead for the various processors, suppliers, and other agribusinesses that feed off of agriculture. "There are now more people employed in the industries that supply farmers with inputs than there are on farms," reports Purdue Dean Thompson, and *seven times* as many in the food processing sector.

When Congress lays its wallet on the table, all these groups dive for it, and farmers sometimes come out short. "Chemical people want us to farm as many acres as possible, for obvious reasons, and they have better lobbyists," observed one farmer to me over breakfast. Another pointed out that warehousers—who make their money storing surpluses—are all for subsidies. The six big grain processors are thrilled that the government holds down the market prices of cereals and guarantees their supplies.

High price supports wiped out export markets and created new competitors for U.S. farmers.

Rather than negotiating the terms of their living in an open economic market where their output would give them leverage, farmers are forced to scrabble in a political arena, to their disadvantage. The marketplace is right next door, the political arena is far away. The marketplace looks only at the value of your specific product. In the political arena, farmers of one crop are pitted against farmers of another. The marketplace demands your attention only when you enter it. The political arena passes its judgments even if you are not paying attention. Like many small business owners, farmers are ill-equipped for such demands. Running an influence-seeking show is not their forte. And even if farmers could master the political game, one discombobulating certainty would remain: The rules all change again in five years—next time in 1990.

Perhaps it shouldn't surprise us, then, that relatively little of farm spending goes to cultivators who could be considered poor or threatened. The 1986 *Economic Report of the President,* released when farm aid was nearing its all-time peak, reported that farmers falling in the USDA's "most financially troubled" category received just 11 percent of all direct government payments. The next most distressed group received only another 13 percent.

Congress has never been able to mount a program of narrow assistance to the heavily indebted farmers in whose name it claims to mercifully act. And even if it could, one might well wonder why the nation would want to underwrite its least efficient growers.

And as I've already hinted, the

tubbiest of the over-eaters at the farm subsidy trough aren't even farmers at all. The favorite fat guy for most waste-watchers is the Archer-Daniels-Midland Company, based in Decatur, Illinois. There is no worse example of a corporate welfare queen in North America. ADM President Dwayne Andreas hands out political donations like Ronald McDonald flings french fries. His beneficiaries include everyone from Bob Dole to Mikhail Gorbachev.

The company makes most of its money from corn sweeteners (beneficiaries of a massive farm-aid boondoggle too depressing to get into here) and corn-distilled ethanol—the ultimate government-made product, an alcohol motor fuel about which you are going to hear a lot more in the future. Ethanol production is underwritten twice—once through the $5 billion America spends to keep corn prices low and once via a 60-cents-a-gallon federal tax break. (The feds have also donated free grain and even paid for one plant; plus 28 states provide subsidies.)

ADM controls nearly 70 percent of the U.S. ethanol market and earns almost half its income from the stuff. Total value of the federal chits it has pocketed over the last four years, according the House Ways and Means Trade Subcommittee—over $4 billion. Amidst a boozy reek, I journeyed through the grim maze of rail sidings, elevators, and chain link fences in Decatur to ask ADM's vice president, very politely, what it all meant. He threw me out. Farm aid boosters: Meet your local salt of the earth.

There are two more, very fundamental, reasons why farm programs hurt American farmers. One is that the programs make what farmers have to sell too expensive for one of their most important markets—foreign buyers. The other is that government programs make what farmers need to *buy* too expensive.

First the exports problem. It is conventional today to state how important foreign sales are becoming to U.S. producers. In agriculture this is gospel truth. In 1981, before damage was done by two successive farm bills, U.S. farmers exported the production of two out of every five acres, bringing in $44 billion dollars in foreign currency. Agricultural exports provided about a fifth of the country's total trade earnings.

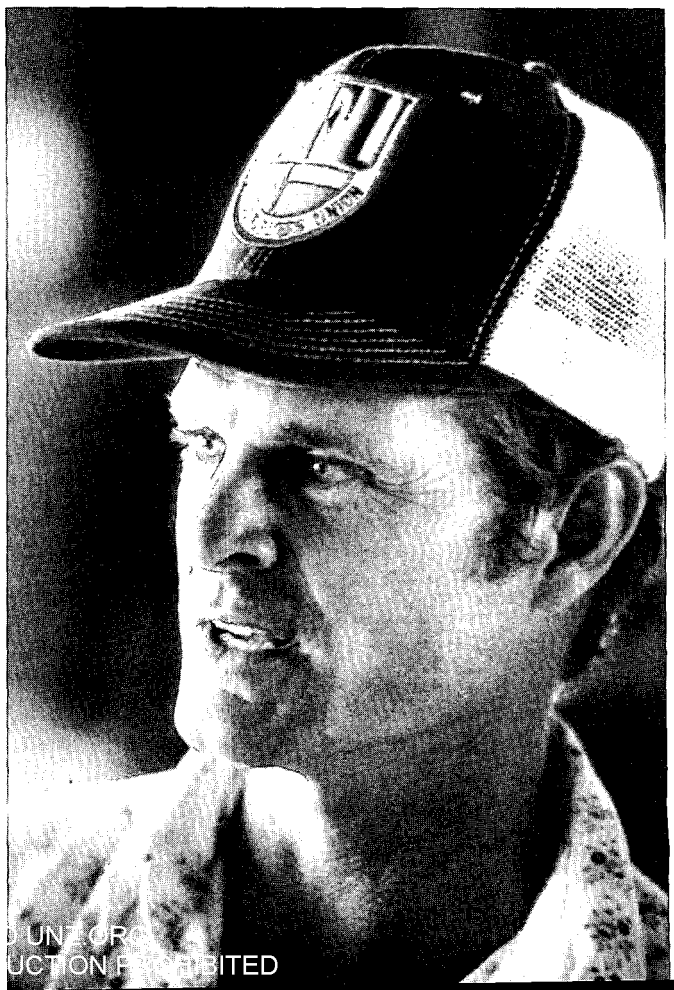
Even today, after some world-class blundering, we still export about three-fifths of our wheat, half of our rice, two-fifths of our cotton, soybeans, and tobacco, and one-fourth of our corn and sorghum. We provide half of the world's grain exports. For the last 20 years, the overall health of U.S. farm income has directly followed the level of our exports.

The damage done in the first half of the 1980s had two sources: prices pushed too high and too many controls on production. Both problems were caused by government programs. As the globe's most efficient producer, the United States stands to benefit greatly from an unfettered flow of farm products from low-cost to high-cost growing areas. But the 1981 farm bill pegged price supports high for most commodities. By buying up crops at artificially high prices, the government sheltered foreign growers from U.S. competition. Not surprisingly, a lot of marginal land around the globe that never would have been farmed under free markets suddenly came into production.

As Don Paarlberg puts it, we "held the umbrella for the cotton growers of Brazil, the wheat growers of Australia, the corn growers of Western Europe and the tobacco growers of Africa." Once the operations freeriding on our price supports are under way, they aren't easily displaced. As the penalty for a few years of elevated returns, American farmers then face a permanent new group of antagonists who were set up in the business by Uncle Sam.

The other way farm programs have hurt exports is through acreage use restrictions. To qualify for government payments, farmers must typically agree to retire a chunk of their land, usually around a fifth. This is intended to reduce output and force up prices. It does. And as Robert Thompson points out, it also "means in effect that we ask every firm in the industry to spread its total fixed costs over 80 percent of its potential output. This raises [our] cost of production relative to competitors, who suffer from no such constraints."

And there is an even more awkward problem. The government allocates rights to grow program crops in the future on the basis of how many acres each farmer grew in years past. Among other problems, this makes farmers very chary about pulling land out of



A.J. Priesmeyer: Incautiously fond of guns and planes, but resourceful, hardworking, and free-living.

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B.J. Hicks, Arthur Priesmeyer's grandson, deftly maneuvers the auger cart, which holds the harvested rice.

safe "program crops" to grow something for the export market, even when the prices offered are very high. To do so means surrendering rights to shift back again easily.

The most tragic recent example of the damage this can do is seen in soybean exports. American farmers basically invented the soybean market, spending a small fortune promoting new uses for "the gold that grows." Soybeans are now used as ingredients in thousands of food and industrial products, and they are the nation's second-most-valuable crop. They have been an export cash machine for American farmers for decades.

Soybeans are by and large unsubsidized, but they compete directly for land with corn, which is heavily supported. Normally, farmers rotate between the two crops for disease-control and soil-conservation purposes. But in the last few years very high price guarantees on corn, combined with inflexible program regulations on crop shifting, made it so much more profitable to plant corn than soybeans that an astonishing 13 million acres switched production. Twenty U.S. crushing plants closed, and other soybean infrastructure collapsed.

With American farmers standing on the sidelines, locked into subsidized corn production, foreigners have jumped into the soybean supply breach. The Brazilians and Argentinians have increased their production by—you guessed it—13 million acres. American farmers' share of the soybean market fell from 75 percent to 45 percent in six years. The business we pushed offshore is worth about $2.5 billion annually, and even if Congress eliminated our production-warping subsidies tomorrow, that trade is probably gone for good. The Latin American investors who cut down rainforest to put in soybeans are in for the long haul.

And the double pity is, corn is a sluggishly traded, underdemanded feedgrain, with annual market growth of only 1 or 2 percent a year. Demand for soybeans, on the other hand, is exploding globally at 4 to 5 percent a year. "If you'd taken a guy on an island and asked him to design a set of government priorities, he would have done exactly the opposite of the current U.S. program," says Allen Johnson, director of the Iowa Soybean Association.

And soybeans are only the latest case in point. Price supports and related interference have regularly damaged other exports, including those of wheat, rice, cotton, tobacco, and other U.S. program crops. The same distortions that clobbered soybean production recently cut U.S. oats output, too. Oats are easy to grow, and drought resistant, require hardly any chemicals, and cost farmers only 30 percent as much as corn to raise. And thanks to recent findings of anti-cholesterol benefits, consumer demand is rising fast. Yet American farmers are not producing oats in sufficient quantities, because other subsidized crops are more lucrative and secure. Once again, the beneficiaries have been foreign growers, stepping in to take over markets that used to belong to American farmers—until their government decided to do them a favor.

Farm programs have created a lobbying explosion. The winners: chemical firms, food processors, and warehousers.

There is a final, giant, reason to doubt farm subsidies are actually in the best interests of most farmers: There is no evidence that the payments actually increase farmers' income, once all expenses are accounted for. The principal economic effect of farm subsidies, say economists, is not to make working farmers wealthier but to push up the price of land and other farm inputs. Most of the benefits are immediately, to use the technical term, "capitalized."

The economic returns offered by farming are set not by government schedules but by the willingness of individuals to stay out there working in the fields even when the money isn't great. "Farmers will keep hanging on with less profit than any business I know of," says Hurst. "The job is one of those powerful afflictions that not even

failure can cure," states John Hosemann, only half in jest. The reluctance of practitioners to leave the occupation is the main cause of farming's narrow margins, a fact no flow of government checks can change.

In the first year that payments for a crop are initiated or increased, producers enjoy a brief uptick in income. Soon, though, the increased returns draw in new resources and new operators from an ever-eager pool. Returns fall. To recover the briefly experienced high income, subsidies must be ratcheted up again. Repeated several times, this cycle can consume enormous amounts of government aid without significantly improving farmers' welfare.

Where does the money go? Into the things that farmers buy, primarily land. "If they doubled the price of corn tomorrow, and guaranteed it for 10 years, the price of land would double or triple around here, and my margins would be the same," says Hurst. Iowa Cooperative Extension Agent Mike Duffy agrees. "Land costs jump directly with government programs. Anytime you put more cash in the pockets of Iowa farmers you see an increase in land prices."

The 1986 *Economic Report of the President* estimated that crop subsidies push up land costs by several hundred dollars an acre, depending on the crop grown. That makes land by far the farmer's biggest expense. And high land prices in turn spawn high equipment costs, as farmers push to get maximum production from each costly acre. Farmers spend three times as much on machinery, equipment, and buildings per unit of production as the average for all U.S. businesses.

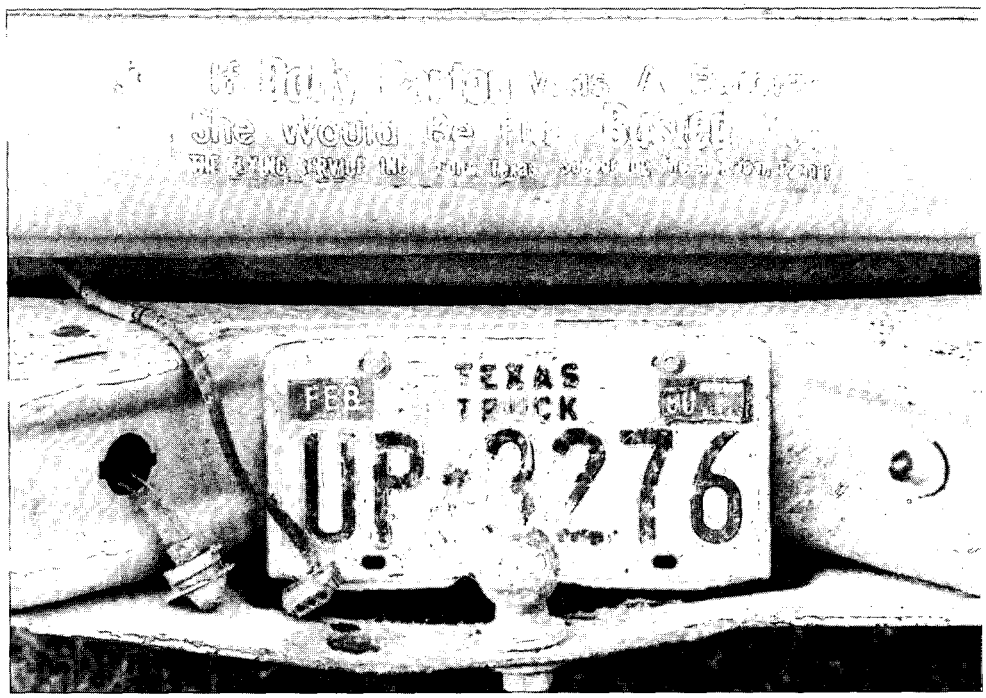
In other words, payments supposedly for the benefit of farmers actually have their main effect in making the planter's "main ingredients" enormously expensive. Landowners, the people who build and sell farm equipment, and fertilizer and chemical merchants are the big gainers. The farmer's living wage eventually ends up at about the same level, only the table on which the transactions take place has been raised.

As economist Bruce Gardner puts it, the winners in the subsidy game are not those who produce the products, but those who possess the resources. "Farm operators themselves...serve primarily as conduits through which higher returns are passed back."

The high costs that subsidies bring have hurt farmers in many ways. For one, interest is now the biggest annual expense for most of them. Given the tendency of interest rates to swing sharply, this makes farming an even more insecure and unpredictable industry than its relation to weather and other factors already makes it.

Accelerating the substitution of capital and machinery for human labor also artificially hastens the shrinkage of the farm population. "If we want to maintain an agrarian sector in this nation, and we ought to, then we shouldn't push land prices up," says Duffy.

Another drawback is that farming has become one of the hardest of all occupations to enter. Quite simply, it takes a bundle of money to set yourself up today. Young people often have no chance. Many resort to methods like those used by David Magness. "When my father went into agriculture he bought his place, but that's hard now. I farm 2,000 acres, and the 5 acres under this house are all that I own. Half of my fields belong to people in Dallas, and half are in the hands of old farm families."



Farm subsidies haven't enriched farmers, just increased their costs, especially the price of land.

Landowners are by far the biggest beneficiaries of today's farm aid, and for all their virtues they are, to use Gardner's words, "not a class of poor people." A third of U.S. farmland is held by persons other than farm operators. Of the remainder in farmers' hands, much was acquired, and must be serviced, at high cost. The beneficiaries there are again nonfarmers—credit providers.

Chopping the work table down to a more human height would suit farmers like Magness just fine. Without subsidies, their revenues would be somewhat smaller, but their expenses would be a lot less gaudy, too. Their bottom line would stay pretty much the same. Only the whole act would take place a lot closer to earth, where the entries and the exits are a lot easier, and the falls aren't nearly so hard. ◼

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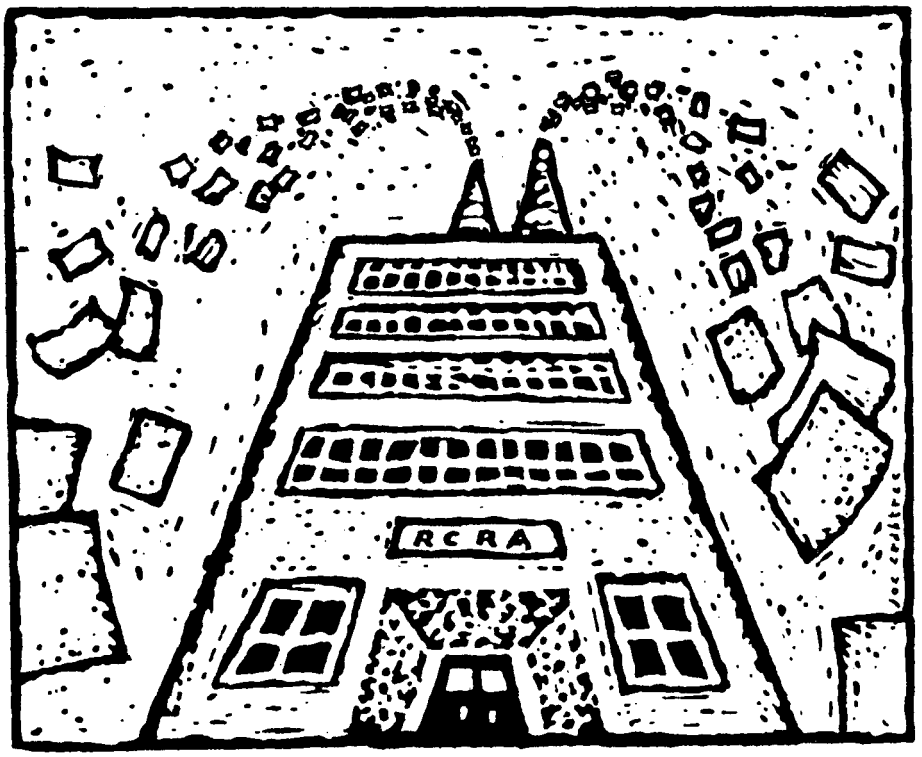
A Hazardous Waste

What else can you call environmental regulations that prevent recycling, discourage cleanups, and stifle improvements in waste treatment?

BY JAMES BOVARD



JOE CRABTREE

Recently, a Chemlawn truck was hit from behind by another vehicle while returning to the office at the end of a day spent fertilizing lawns. The accident ruptured the truck's storage tank, which the driver had rinsed out after finishing his work. It also propelled the Chemlawn man into a head-on collision—with the inflexible regulations of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).

Under RCRA, the watered-down residue of the chemicals the driver had been spraying on people's lawns all day was considered a serious threat to public health and the environment. Local police called out an emergency response team, the area was cordoned off, and the leakage from the tank was treated as a highly toxic waste.

Such incidents are all too common. A wide range of critics, including former EPA officials, have attacked the policies established by RCRA as unfair, irrational, wasteful, self-defeating, and inconsistent with other environmental standards. Although intended to protect public health and encourage recycling, the law has done the opposite. Yet RCRA remains the single most important law governing waste disposal, with tendrils extending throughout the economy, affecting businesses from the corner service station to large industrial firms.

RCRA is largely the result of previous, unsuccessful federal enviromental policies. In the early 1970s, the Clean Water and Clean Air acts imposed zero-emission standards on many substances. Factories shifted some pollutants from smokestacks and drainage pipes to sludges deposited in dumps and landfills. Although it did reduce public exposure to some hazards, for the most part this process constituted an expensive reshuffling, rather than a reduction, of hazardous wastes.

In an attempt to encourage recycling instead of dumping, Congress enacted RCRA in 1976 and revised the act in 1984 to make it much more prescriptive. But the prescriptions—congressionally mandated procedures and treatment standards imposed on waste producers and handlers—were based on little or no scientific evidence of health risks. They were concocted by House and Senate staff assistants with minimal knowledge of the regulated waste products.

"I don't think Congress understood the issue," says former EPA General Counsel Frank Blake. "I don't think there are many staff people on the Hill who understand what RCRA treatment standards mean."

Ignorance was compounded by ideology. Comments a Senate aide who has worked on hazardous waste issues throughout the '80s: "The staffers who were the most instrumental in writing the bill were extremists who relied on the environmental lobbies and the Hazardous Waste Treatement Council for most of their information."

As a result, RCRA turned out to bear little relationship to the protection of public health. Many of the regulations are essentially useless—as the EPA itself has admitted in its studies and in the fine print of the regulatory notices it publishes in *The Federal Register*. The agency has conceded, for example, that several petroleum wastes whose land disposal it wants to ban actually pose negligible health threats.

And while other environmental regulations try to weigh the risks of any given product against its benefits, RCRA considers only risks. As a result, its standards frequently conflict with those of other federal laws. Under the Toxic Substance Control Act, for example, the EPA permits the use of certain fertilizers. But under RCRA, the agency has ruled that piles of grass cuttings tainted with the same chemicals are a hazardous waste that must be subjected to extensive treatment.

RCRA also fails to recognize that the risk posed by a substance depends on its concentration. Under the Clean Air and Safe Drinking Water acts, if the toxic concentration falls below the level deemed hazardous by the EPA, the substance is permitted.

Under RCRA, by contrast, the EPA considers a substance hazardous if it contains *any* amount of almost 500 chemicals, or if it is flammable, toxic, reactive, or corrosive. A substance that is mixed with, comes into contact with, or is derived from a hazardous substance is also defined as hazardous and requires the same extensive (and potentially endless) treatment.

Blake, the former EPA general counsel, explains the approach this way: "You start from the fact that the concept of hazardous waste probably has more relationship to the concept of sin than to the chemical composition of the waste. Once touched by sin, you are forever tainted."

In addition to the degree of toxicity, sound regulation ought to consider the likelihood of human exposure to the waste product. But RCRA has ignored this crucial factor. In 1986 Wendy Gramm, then head of the Office of Management and Budget's regulatory office, criticized proposed RCRA regulations for presuming "that the individual receives the maximum exposure to the substance—in effect, that he would sink a straw into groundwater within the disposal facility property boundary and drink almost half a gallon of this water each day for 70 years." Her critique went unheeded; as enacted, the regulations were based on even stricter standards.

Under RCRA, "clean and safe" is defined as the lowest concentration that can be achieved using existing methods—the "best available technology" standard. With each technological breakthrough, the definition changes.

But the health threat posed by a given concentration of a toxin does not depend on the sophistication of disposal technology. Advances in waste treatment cannot render a particular pollutant more dangerous. So the difference between the health-threat standard used by other EPA programs and the best-available-technology requirement set by RCRA indicates the degree of unnecessary regulation—treatment for treatment's sake—that RCRA imposes.

For example, the acceptable levels for acetone (used in nail polish and paint), methylene chloride (used in paint removers), and trichlorofluoromethane (used in fire extinguishers) under the other laws are, respectively, 400, 1,600, and 20,000 times the levels that RCRA mandates. The best-available-technology standard forces businesses to spend millions of dollars yet does little or nothing to protect human health.

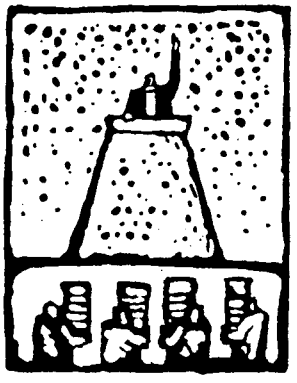
When companies clean up their properties, RCRA requires

that they bring the wastes down to the "background levels" at which the chemicals occur naturally in the surrounding environment—not simply to levels at which the threat to human health is insignificant. If someone poured a glass of chlorinated tap water onto the ground at a RCRA cleanup site, he or she could be fined for polluting the environment, says Blake.

RCRA hinders actions and technologies that could improve the environment. It discourages voluntary cleanups, notes its former administrator, Marcia Williams. If a company wishes to clean up part of its property, it must make the entire site meet RCRA's ultraclean specifications. It must also obtain a cleanup permit, a process that takes two to four years and costs between $500,000 and $1 million.

According to one former high-ranking EPA official now working as a lawyer for a waste-treatment company in Maryland, some lower-level agency officials are openly hostile to voluntary cleanups by industry. He describes their response: "If you are going to distract our resources by bringing in this pesky voluntary cleanup, why should we make it easy for you?"

EPA's permit process has devastated the mobile waste-treatment business, which offers quick responses to threats from hazardous waste. It routinely takes six months to get a permit for a treatment unit that may be used for only one or two days. Many companies have gone into the bootleg mobile-unit business, not bothering to get permits. As one environmental engineer notes, "The only reason the system has not broken down is because many people are ignoring EPA rules."



RCRA treats hazardous waste as original sin.

RCRA also hampers innovation that could improve waste treatment. To install any new facilities for waste treatment, a company must first secure a permit from the EPA. Permit approval often takes one to four years and is by no means guaranteed. "You are not going to make a major capital outlay if you don't know if you are going to get a permit or not," says Russ Hanes, environmental manager for Mobil Oil.

The Leak Detection Technology Association complained in 1987 that "the largest single problem facing tank owners is not technology; rather, it is hesitancy in implementing leak-detection safeguards out of fear that EPA will disapprove those safeguards." The association warned the EPA that "leak-detection systems are not being installed and leaks are not being detected. In other words, serious environmental damage is occurring even though we have the know-how and equipment to prevent it."

Frequently, EPA officials require that applicants list the manufacturer's name for each pump, gasket, or polymer to be used at a planned disposal site. Since the permit process can take half a decade, this effectively locks in outdated technology. Waste-treatment technology is speeding along, but the EPA is doing its best to jam on the brakes.

By prescribing countless minor details, RCRA makes dealing with hazardous wastes an enormously expensive endeavor—to little or no gain in environmental quality. Take fences, for example. Under the Clean Water Act, a company need only certify that its waste-treatment facilities are protected by a fence that prevents accidental entry and impedes willful entry. This usually means an 8-foot-high chain-link fence with barbed wire on top. But under RCRA, the company must submit roughly 25 pages showing the fence design, the location of fence posts and gates, a cross-section of the fence's wire mesh, and so on.

Such regulations can reach ridiculous heights. An EastmanKodak factory required permits for waste disposal under both the Clean Water Act and RCRA. The Clean Water permit application was 17 pages long, while the RCRA application formed a stack *7 feet tall*. David Thomas, a chemist and program analyst for the company, notes that RCRA permit applicants must report such picayune details as the brands and models of telephones and fire extinguishers they plan to use; buying a new brand of phone requires a permit modification.

Getting a permit to operate a waste-handling facility routinely costs the applicant $500,000 to $750,000. The EPA, meanwhile, must devote scarce time and money to perusing permit applications instead of checking for actual hazards. As the agency conceded in 1986, "Our facility standards too often focus in voluminous detail on the means of carrying out regulations, and not the ends, which [are] a healthy population and a clean environment." Indeed, the EPA has already issued more than 17,000 pages of RCRA notices and regulations.

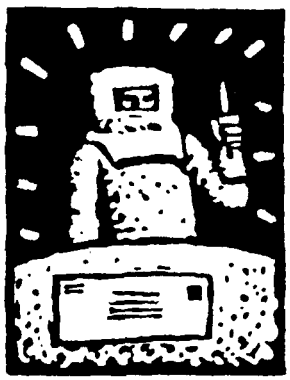
Despite its emphasis on some details, however, RCRA imposes an odd kind of uniformity that ignores important environmental factors. A 1986 draft policy analysis prepared by the EPA recognized that in ruling on proposals for new waste-disposal sites, the agency gives little consideration to "such factors as location, the surrounding environment, the nearest population, the nearest groundwater aquifers, atmospheric conditions, the type of waste managed, and the facility's compliance history." Under this evenhanded approach, an applicant seeking to dispose of old car batteries in rural Nevada could expect the same treatment as somebody who wanted to dump dioxin in Newark, New Jersey.

And the EPA has been capricious in announcing its regulations. "Some of the complex regulations are effective on the same day they are published," says Kenneth Price, a chemist with Heritage Environmental Services, an Indiana waste handler. "You spend six months sitting around trying to guess what the regulations are going to be....It is like regulatory Russian roulette—if you guessed wrong, you shot yourself in the foot."

JOE CRABTREE

Nor has RCRA done much to encourage recycling—supposedly a major goal of the act. In fact, the Institute of Scrap Recycling is a leading RCRA critic because the law makes recycling difficult, expensive, and legally risky. For example, the EPA is expected to rule this year that used oil is a hazardous waste. The ruling will require service stations that currently collect used oil for recycling to formally apply for EPA permits; it will also impose on them a heavy burden of paperwork to keep track of the oil. All handlers of used oil could be exposed to unlimited, perpetual liability—so that if the oil is ever involved in an environmental problem, they could be sued as if they were responsible. The likely result is that many, if not most, current handlers of used oil will stop handling it and that far more used oil will end up being dumped surreptitiously into sewer systems. By calling used oil "hazardous," the EPA has made it a greater hazard.

Similarly, the aluminum industry has been bushwhacked by the EPA's restrictions. Until last year, aluminum manufacturers recycled spent potliner, a waste product that contains traces of cyanide but is about 55 percent carbon and therefore an excellent fuel for industrial kilns. After incineration in the kilns, the ash from spent potliner has almost no cyanide residue—less than is contained in peach pits.



But in September 1988, the EPA ruled that spent potliner is a hazardous waste. As a result, any efforts to recycle the material now require completion of hundreds of forms and create the potential for vast liability. The day before the EPA's new regulation went into effect was the last day industrial kilns would voluntarily accept the heating material from aluminum plants. As a result, most of the spent potliner now is being sent to landfills, where it will lie for decades, if not centuries.

The EPA admits that many RCRA rules are useless.

To make matters worse, RCRA has turned the recycling industry into a political target. A major battle over RCRA rules is brewing between business lobbies in Washington. "The treatment industry appears to be opposed to EPA rules that would allow more recycling, since any wastes that are recycled mean less business for the treatment industry," says Peter Halpin of World Resources Company, a major recycling firm based in McLean, Virginia.

The Hazardous Waste Treatment Council, a lobby of waste-treatment companies, is pushing the EPA to impose the most stringent treatment standards. It often denounces the agency to the press when its regulations are less than draconian. The *Washington Post* and other major news organizations have gobbled up the council's statements as if they were gospel. Reporters rarely, if ever, note that the group is about as objective as an agricultural lobby calling for more farm subsidies.

The council has tried to whip up a frenzy of waste-product fear on Capitol Hill. At a 1988 hearing, Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.) reported one of the lobby's tactics. A recycling company had visited several Senate offices and left behind small vials of kiln ash attached to letter openers embossed with the corporate emblem. The Hazardous Waste Treatment Council, which represents several firms that compete with the recycler, had been lobbying to shut the company down. "I learned that [the council], in an effort to inflame emotions and stimulate fear among the staff, tried to hire some individuals to dress up in 'moon suits' and come up here on the Hill to collect these letter openers as if they were an imminent threat to the health of the staff," Simpson said.

Instead, the council ended up sending letters to senators warning them that they were in possession of a hazardous material and urging them to have it taken to an EPA-approved facility for proper disposal. "This type of lobbying activity is unfortunate and decidedly boobish, and I do hope it will not continue," Simpson concluded. (The council refused to respond to numerous requests for an interview.)

In 1986, the Office of Technology Assessment noted that environmental protection in the United States is less economically efficient than in European countries—that Americans pay more for the same level of environmental quality. "The reason seems to be not merely greater government regulation but *less flexible* environmental regulations in the United States that block effective and more economical and technologically advanced solutions," said the OTA.

RCRA provides a prize example of this less-bang-for-the-buck approach. It epitomizes the fundamental intellectual failure in the breakdown of American environmental policy—the failure to examine seriously why programs don't work, to admit error, and to consider alternatives.

Congress and the EPA have attempted to solve the waste problem by relying on decrees, rather than crafting incentives that provide businesses with goals to achieve in whatever ways work best. By doing so, they have delayed cleanups, stifled treatment innovation, discouraged recycling, and wasted billions of dollars. They have ill served the environment and the public health, as well as the economy.

The Department of Commerce estimates that compliance with federal antipollution regulations costs $85 billion a year. Unfortunately, much of this money is wasted on filling out permit requests and cleaning up wastes that aren't genuine hazards. The more we spend on cleanliness as a moral ideal, the less we have to spend on real public-health threats. ■

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THE DOOR S

One of the Bush administration's few concrete responses to the massacre in Tiananmen Square was its decision to allow Chinese nationals in the United States to extend their stays here. The action was noteworthy, given the treatment Chinese dissidents had previously received from the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

In one particularly egregious case, the INS denied asylum to Wang Bingzhang, a founder of the Chinese Alliance for Democracy and publisher of the magazine *China Spring*. (See "Dissident China," February 1988.) The New York City resident had been publicly branded a traitor by China's ambassador to the United States. Yet only the intervention of an obscure Justice Department bureau, the Asylum Policy and Review Unit (APRU), prevented his deportation.

Established in 1987, APRU has reviewed scores of INS asylum denials and recommended that the attorney general overrule many of them. The unit's relative lack of success—just 35 decisions have been overturned as a result of its efforts—reflects blatant obstruction by the INS. That agency, although entrusted with the humanitarian task of giving refuge to the victims of oppression, "has a border-guard mentality," says Roger Pilon, a former director of the APRU and now a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. "The INS sees itself as a law-enforcement agency charged primarily with protecting our borders and hence with keeping people out," he adds, a posture that it takes even when evaluating asylum applications. (Asylum applicants are refugees already visiting or residing in the United States. The INS and State Department share authority over refugees seeking to enter the country.)

Not surprisingly, the INS sees the APRU as poaching on its bureaucratic turf. Late last year then-INS Commissioner Alan Nelson wrote a memo urging Attorney General Richard Thornburgh to disband the APRU. The bureau, complained Nelson, was "just plain financially wasteful," having cost $750,000 since its inception. Coming from a man who had presided over a $350-million increase in his own agency's budget and the production of an INS movie extolling his record as director, Nelson's professed concern for the taxpayers was a mite suspicious. His real worry was undoubtedly the APRU's role in the asylum process.

Whenever the INS denies someone asylum, it is supposed to notify the APRU. In practice, however, the unit has to "fight the INS every step of the way, even to get cases referred," says Pilon, who headed the APRU from its creation in April 1987 until November 1988. Early last year the INS stopped answering queries from the APRU and even, on occasion, from the deputy attorney general. Because of this dismal history, the

TOM DILLON

LAMS SHUT

Why we can't trust the INS with U.S. refugee policy.

BY DOUG BANDOW

Justice Department has drafted regulations to strengthen the review process. But the rules remain in limbo because of steadfast INS opposition; Nelson's memo proposing that the APRU be disbanded was part of the INS counterattack.

The struggle between APRU and the INS has ramifications beyond the survival of a small government bureau. Driven by its border-guard impulses, the INS has turned away thousands of people seeking freedom and has undermined the American tradition of providing a haven for the oppressed. It has demonstrated that it cannot be trusted with the job of determining which refugees will be allowed to enter or remain in the United States. It is time to reevaluate both U.S. refugee policy and the INS's role in enforcing it.

The law calls for the United States to grant legal residence to people who can show a well-founded fear of persecution. But the INS, which is dedicated to keeping people out of the country, tends not to recognize persecution—even in extreme cases. Consider the following individuals, who, like Wang Bingzhang, were granted asylum only after intervention by the APRU:

- Oscar Alvarez, a member of the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement who was severely injured in a mob attack and jailed by the Sandinistas;
- Ethiopian Amare Astatke, a vocal Baptist and anticommunist who was imprisoned for five months and tortured by the Mengistu regime;
- Jolanta Gazda, who was imprisoned for her work in the Polish student underground;
- Iranian Zahara Hejazirad, who was arrested for "anti-Islamic" and "anti-government" activities and who also converted to Christianity, a criminal offense;
- Arpad Kis, who was harrassed, beaten, and fined for his political and religious activities in Romania;
- Salvadoran Elmer Martinez, whom guerrillas attempted to assassinate for serving in the military;
- Adel MeKraz of Libya, who was active in the National Front for the Salvation of Libya, a group opposed to Qadaffi's regime;
- Yama Ahmed Mirkhil, a member of the Afghan Mujaheddin when he was jailed, tortured, and blinded; and
- Dorothy Matabole Ralebipi, an antiapartheid activist who was arrested and beaten by the South African government.

The need for an independent asylum oversight office at Justice has never been more urgent. World events have led more people to ask for refuge in the United States, yet both the INS and the State Department, which works with refugees abroad, have increasingly turned a blind eye to those fleeing foreign tyranny.

Consequently, emigration from the Soviet Union is like a good news/bad news joke. The good news is that *glasnost* and *perestroika* apparently mean something: The Soviet government is allowing more and more people to leave the country. The bad news, testified John White, president of the National Association of Evangelicals and a board member of World Relief, is that "as the door from the Soviet Union is beginning to open, the once wide and welcome door of the United States has already slammed shut" on many would-be refugees.

For instance, the Soviet Union has begun to allow increasing numbers of Pentecostals and other evangelical Christians to emigrate. In January alone nearly 1,000 Pentecostals left Moscow for Vienna, and as many as 10,000 are expected to be released by the end of the year. There is no question that Christian evangelicals have long been a persecuted minority in the USSR. Pentecostals and other unregistered Baptists have been sentenced to prison, mental hospitals, labor camps, and internal exile for practicing their religion.

Yet as of February INS officials had denied more than 150 of the Pentecostals refugee status. Kent Hill, executive director of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, notes that the KGB subsequently used the INS rejections to discourage evangelicals from trying to exercise their new freedom to leave. Under pressure from religious groups, the INS later overturned most of the denials, but rejections are again on the rise.

The number of Jews allowed to leave the USSR has also increased dramatically—from 914 in 1986 to 8,149 in 1987, to 19,343 in 1988. As many as 54,000 are expected to emigrate this year, which could break the record set a decade ago. But last year the State Department began denying Jews who had left the USSR refugee status, and the U.S. embassy in Moscow temporarily stopped issuing visas to those who wanted to leave. The State Department now warns of potential two-year waits just for interviews to determine applicants' eligibility for refugee status. By mid-year, 30,000 Soviets were waiting for interviews in Moscow and 12,000 to 14,000 Jewish emigres,

together with 2,200 evangelicals, were in limbo in Rome and Vienna. More than 5,000 from both groups were appealing denials of refugee status.

Last year, then-Secretary of State George Schultz assured American Jewish groups that the United States was not trying to limit Jewish immigration. And, in fact, Washington's niggardliness is nondiscriminatory: Soviet Armenians, too, have found it harder to immigrate to the United States. Barely 200 Armenians a year were allowed to leave the USSR during the mid-1980s; last year the rate was roughly 1,200 a month. But State Department lawyers object that many of these people, fleeing a region beset by violent ethnic conflict, have not demonstrated the "well-founded fear of persecution" required by U.S. law.

Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.), who has made a career of trying to build walls around America, has also complained about the Armenian influx: "We must distinguish between the right to leave the Soviet Union and the right to enter the United States." In 1988, Washington began denying refugee status to Armenian emigrés and refusing to issue visas to Armenians. Hundreds of Armenian families now live in bureaucratic limbo in Moscow. They have given up their homes and jobs to emigrate, only to be denied permission to enter the United States.

If Soviet policy again changes, some would-be immigrants may never get out. "We don't know how long the Soviet Union will have a liberal emigration policy for Soviet Jews," says Phillip Saperia, assistant executive vice president of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, who speaks of "panic in the Soviet Jewish community." Under pressure from American Jewish groups, the administration offered late last year to admit up to 2,000 Soviets a month on "parole" status. Unlike other refugees, they will have to find a sponsor to pay transportation and living expenses and they will not be automatically eligible for citizenship.

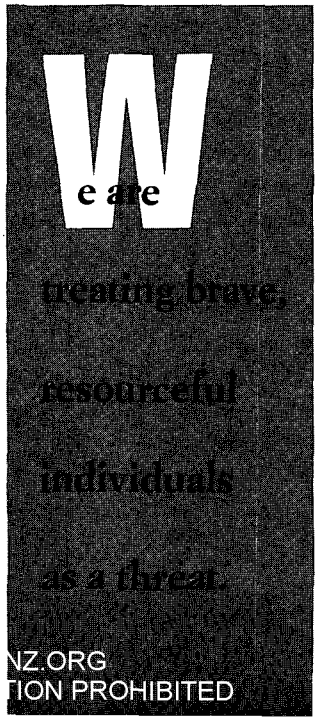
The Bush administration has also launched a concerted program to imprison asylum applicants from Nicaragua—despite President Reagan's declaration in 1988 that the United States "accepts responsibility" for the thousands of Contras and their families who are now refugees. Even under Reagan, the INS was rejecting 47 percent of asylum applications filed by Nicaraguans, among them members of the resistance and deserters from the military. But the agency's conduct began to grow even uglier at the end of the year. Nelson said the INS planned to "tighten up our procedures" because, in his view, many of the asylum applications were frivolous.

Explained Virginia Kice, an INS spokesperson, "they tell us they are here because they want to improve their lives, their standard of living." In February, the INS instituted almost instantaneous adjudication of asylum claims by Nicaraguans in Texas, detaining those whose applications were denied. Overall, the approval rate for asylum applications has dropped from 53 percent in 1988 to roughly 20 percent under the new system. "We're pleased with the results to date," Nelson told a House subcommittee in March. He pledged to open more detention centers, jails, and stockades to accommodate Central Americans who try to enter the United States.

For years, the INS has glibly denied asylum to those it deemed "economic refugees," running from poverty, not from persecution. But there is no clear distinction between political and economic refugees. Even poor peasants suffer under tyrannical regimes, and tyrants often control their people by restricting economic liberties. The United States is routinely rejecting hundreds of refugees from politically repressive lands. In 1987, Washington turned down 53 percent of asylum applicants from Ethiopia, one of the world's most vicious states; the rejection rate fell to "only" 23 percent in 1988. In 1987 and 1988, 117 of 175 Afghans, 38 of 93 Chinese, 33 of 57 Czechs, 11 of 163 Hungarians, 43 of 191 Libyans, 870 of 1,750 Poles, and 16 of 83 Soviets were barred from settling in the United States.

The combination of a miserly law and a Scrooge-like bureaucracy is turning America's immigrant heritage on its head. The first problem is the Refugee Act of 1980, which requires asylum applicants to demonstrate fear of *individualized* persecution. But the more oppressive the state, the less likely it is that the applicant can show he or she is being singled out for mistreatment.

Indeed, one former State Department official responsible for judging asylum applications has argued that the fact that some applicants from communist countries were allowed to travel indicated that they were "privileged," not persecuted, and that "their reasons for staying in the U.S. were not valid." Similarly, the INS has explicitly cited the fact that applicants had been issued passports as evidence that they were not persecuted. In short, the only people who can readily prove the likelihood of persecution are those who, because of persecution, are unable to get out.



Second, the INS's general hostility to immigrants has been compounded by incompetence and insensitivity. An internal Justice Department study completed last year found that the agency's staff is inadequately trained. The General Accounting Office reviewed INS procedures for deciding refugee status of Soviets and found evidence of "uneven standards and inconsistencies among INS officers." The INS examiners didn't speak Russian, and few knew anything about life in the USSR; many of them had simply been transferred from

U.S.-Mexican border duty.

If President Bush is serious about promoting a "kinder, gentler nation," he needs to overhaul both asylum law and administrative procedures. The first step is to ask Congress to change the requirement that refugees and asylum applicants demonstrate a fear of individualized persecution. The proposed Justice Department regulations would take an important step in this direction, allowing applicants to show that they are members of an oppressed group. The Justice and State departments have also drafted legislation to accept over the next five years 150,000 "special immigrants" whose admission serves the national interest—for example, by encouraging the Soviet Union to liberalize its emigration policies—even if the refugees don't meet the traditional legal standard. These measures, though they would be an important step forward, still do not go far enough: People should be allowed in the United States if their basic rights are being violated, irrespective of specific persecution and Washington's foreign-policy aims.

Hundreds of Armenian families live in bureaucratic limbo in Moscow.

The United States also needs to accept more refugees. The State Department proposed to admit 94,000 in 1989, up slightly from the 87,500 allowed last year. But there are roughly 54,000 Vietnamese in camps throughout Southeast Asia, and all could easily be accommodated by the United States. Their situation is particularly desperate. The number of "boat people" has increased more than 40 percent annually each of the past two years, and surrounding states have grown tired of the exodus. Several Southeast Asian governments now screen refugees and deny those determined to be "economic migrants" the opportunity to resettle in other countries. Hong Kong, Thailand, Australia, and Malaysia are all pushing Vietnam to implement a policy of forcible repatriation. Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia have even been forcing some oceanborne refugees back to sea: "First we give them warnings, and if they keep coming in we just shoot them," explains a Thai official.

The proposed ceiling is also not high enough to allow in the growing number of refugees from the Soviet Union, Nicaragua, and elsewhere. Large numbers of immigrants would benefit the country; it has admitted more than 700,000 Vietnamese since 1975 and has prospered as a result.

The United States should welcome residents of Hong Kong who want to leave before China takes control of the territory in 1997. Under normal immigration quotas, Washington admits a paltry 5,000 people from Hong Kong a year; Rep. John Porter (R-Ill.) has proposed increasing that to 50,000. But given the inevitability of political and economic repression come 1997, Washington should permit even more to come as refugees.

The State Department has justified refugee restrictions by citing the limits imposed by its $156.5-million budget for admissions (an average of $1,863 per refugee for processing, transportation, placement, and training). But existing funds could be spread further by reducing federal aid for refugees who are admitted; former Secretary of State Schultz has suggested cutting the benefit period from 31 to 24 months.

More important, the refugee program needs to be disentangled from the budget. Increased use of the Justice Department's parole authority would admit more people at no cost to the public. Parole status is only a stopgap, however, since it does not entitle people to become citizens.

Instead, Congress should drop all limits on refugees who immigrate without government assistance, whether they pay their own way or rely on family members or other benefactors. There is a network of organizations—ethnic groups, churches, community and philanthropic enterprises, and the like—available to assist new refugees. In fact, the State Department recently arranged for some Cuban emigré groups to handle transportation and resettlement costs, and officials say similar negotiations are underway with other organizations. (In recent years the department has been admitting up to 4,000 privately financed refugees annually, a welcome, though inadequate, step.)

Finally, the INS should be divested of authority over refugee and asylum policy. The agency sees its purpose as keeping people out of the United States and resents any oversight: Last fall Associate Deputy Attorney General Thomas Christina observed in an internal memo that the "INS clearly regards the very existence of APRU as a slur on its institutional ability to administer the Refugee Act."

The Justice Department's draft regulations would reform the current process by creating a new corps of asylum officers, but such a system would still leave the INS with control of asylum cases. Instead, the administration should expand the APRU, transforming it into an office in the Civil Division to take over management of refugee and asylum affairs. Examiners would be answerable to the assistant attorney general in charge of the Civil Division rather than to the INS commissioner.

After the United States has spent so many years demanding free emigration for Soviet Jews and Pentecostals, Vietnamese, and other oppressed peoples, the government's reluctance to accept those who are now being released is both tragic and cheap. The richest nation on earth is treating brave, resourceful individuals as a threat. To the INS, asylum application is a bureaucratic nuisance, but to the refugee it may be a matter of life and death. It is time that we lived up to our immigrant heritage, offering a humane haven in a world full of refugees desperately in need.

Contributing Editor Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and the author of The Politics of Plunder: Misgovernment in Washington, *forthcoming from Transaction Books.*

BEWARE OF BARGAINS

BY MICHAEL WALKER

Recent publicity about the problems of Americans who lack health insurance has renewed calls for universal coverage guaranteeing free medical care. But with the British model in disrepute, American proponents of socialized medicine increasingly cite the example of Canada.

In particular, they argue that Canada's apparent success in controlling health-care costs demonstrates the superiority of its system, under which the government regulates and pays virtually all medical fees. On closer examination, however, this interpretation proves shaky.

True, Canada spends 8 1/2 cents per dollar of GNP on health care, a level that has remained basically unchanged since 1978, while medical expenditures have risen to 11 cents per dollar in the United States. But even on its face, this fact does not indicate that Canada's health-care system is preferable to a more market-oriented approach. After all, high fractions of income devoted to housing, recreation, and travel are considered signs of an affluent society. Why shouldn't health-care spending be viewed similarly?

Further, the experts bemoan the low share of GNP spent on education in this country. Does it make sense to invest a large percentage of GNP in education—in improving human capital—but not in health care to ensure the proper maintenance of that capital?

Contrary to advocates of the Canadian model, it is by no means clear that spending less on health care is *a priori* a good thing. Indeed, although the United Kingdom spends about half as much per capita on health care as Canada does, no one therefore infers that British patients are better off. (In fact, the reverse is true.)

So we cannot safely conclude that Canada's health-care system works better than its American counterpart based merely on the difference in cost. To determine whether American patients are truly being bilked in comparison to their northern neighbors, it is necessary to measure performance more directly.

That is the aim of an ongoing study by the Fraser Institute, a public policy think tank in Vancouver. Although the final results are not in, the evidence so far suggests that Canadian health-care consumers get what they pay for: fewer facilities and longer waits for diagnostic services and surgical procedures.

In the absence of market-set prices, waiting lists have emerged as a means of allocating health services in Canada.

The study's preliminary findings indicate that Canada's lower health-care costs are accompanied by a lower level of service. For example:

- The entire province of British Columbia has fewer CAT scanners than the city of Seattle.
- There are more magnetic-resonance imaging machines in Michigan than in all of Canada.
- With a population of 570,000, the province of Newfoundland has only one functioning CAT-scanner team, so patients must wait two months for a scan. Pap-smear tests also take two months or longer. The waiting period for mammograms is two-and-a-half months; for bone scans, 90 days; and for myelograms, three to four months.
- Throughout Canada, there are long delays for hip replacement (6 to 10 months), cataract removal (2 months or more), and coronary bypass surgery (up to a year).
- According to a February 13 cover story in *Maclean's* magazine, six heart patients died last year waiting for surgery at Winnipeg's Health Sciences Centre. The article reported that about 1,000 people in Toronto were being compelled to wait as long as a year for bypass operations and that two had died since December. Delays at the city's Hospital for Sick Children are so bad that in January the facility sent home 40 children in need of heart surgery.
- Administrators at a major metropolitan hospital in British Columbia estimate average waiting periods of six weeks for orthopedic surgery and four weeks for both elective and urgent general surgery.

By contrast, critics of the U.S. health-care system complain not of shortages but of excess capacity. For insured American patients, waiting lists are virtually unheard of.

The types of problems brought to light by the Fraser Institute may not be apparent to most Canadians, since the waiting lists are confined to services beyond those provided by general practitioners. But the shortcomings found by the study should nevertheless give pause to those inclined to imitate Canada's health-care system.

In the absence of market-set prices, waiting lists have emerged as a means of allocating services. By mandating fees, Canada's universal, government-provided health insurance in effect restricts the supply of medical care. Moreover, health-care costs are covered primarily with general tax revenue; there is little connection between insurance premiums and actual expenditures. Because the consumers are not the buyers, their influence on the service providers is limited.

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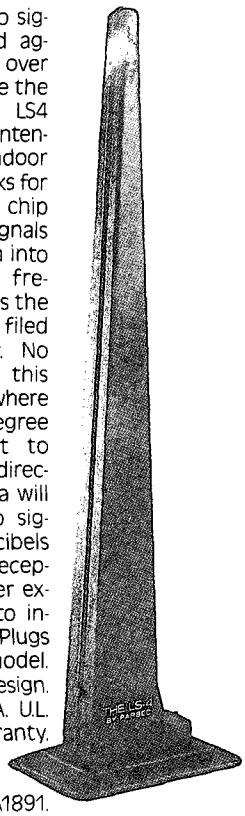

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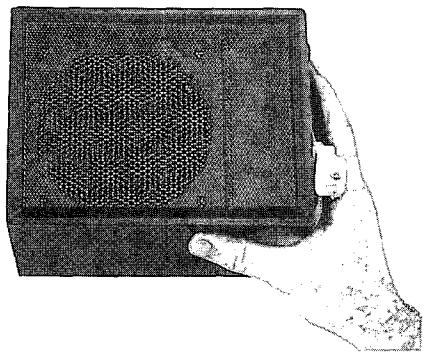

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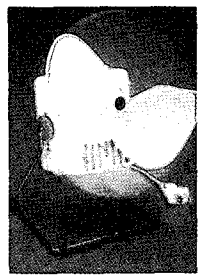

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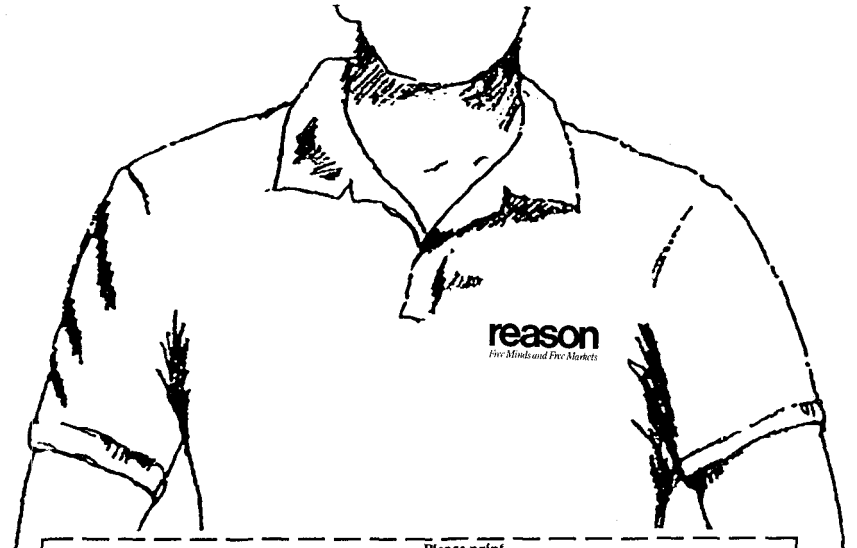

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Indeed, the Canadian government discourages physicians from accommodating patients dissatisfied by service under the state-funded system. User fees and extra billing are prohibited, and doctors are not permitted to serve both publicly insured and private patients.

In the United States, because government plays a smaller role, patients have more options. And since the buyers of insurance bear the burden of rising costs, there is a strong incentive for innovations such as health-maintenance organizations, which help control general medical costs by increasing competition.

Under the U.S. system, of course, not everyone has equal access to health care, since millions of Americans are uninsured. A closer look at Canada's system, however, reveals that it does not provide equal access, either, since waiting periods for medical services vary from one part of the country to another.

In any case, the issue of uninsured citizens should be dealt with as an income problem rather than a deficiency in the health-care system. People who have difficulty paying health-insurance premiums may also have difficulty buying food. We do not therefore conclude that something is wrong with the food-distribution system, nor do we heavy-handedly interfere with industry to solve the problem.

While government may choose to supplement the incomes of the poor so they can afford a minimum level of health care, it is folly to insist on the same standard for all, regardless of their means. In Canada, those with higher incomes are effectively prevented from obtaining better health care by paying more for it. The rationale is that enforcing one standard gives everyone an interest in resisting attempts to cut back funding for the system. But because the best cannot be made available to everyone, such an arrangement results in a lower quality of health care overall. Rather than throw a group of drowning people life preservers, the government sinks a yacht so they can cling to the wreckage.

Michael Walker is executive director of the Fraser Institute in Vancouver.

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BUT IS IT OPERA?

BY T. KEATING HOLLAND

Twenty years ago the British rock group The Who threw down the most ambitious gauntlet in rock-and-roll history—the rock opera *Tommy*.

Two decades later, the gauntlet still untouched, The Who returned to America to recreate that triumph in two up-to-$1,000-a-ticket performances of *Tommy* in New York and Los Angeles. Those historic performances were the bookends of a North American tour that quickly became the standout, soldout, rock-and-roll event of the summer.

The return of rock opera at Radio City Music Hall before 4,000 lucky—and rich—Who fans was the monster kickoff of the tour. How can you fault a rock concert in which "Behind Blue Eyes," "Won't Get Fooled Again," and "Baba O'Riley" are just part of the *encore*? After that, The Who began packing 60,000 people a night into outdoor stadiums.

Not bad for three graying rockers who once sang, "Hope I die before I get old."

What made *Tommy* such a hot ticket—despite the price—is the place it has in rock history. When The Who performed it in the Metropolitan Opera House in 1970, a New York opera critic proclaimed, "The forces of the future are no longer standing at the gate. They are inside."

But since then, rock has produced nothing like it. No one has written music as cohesive or as intellectually pretentious. And by the mid-'70s, The Who got exhausted by the demands of two solid hours of performing without a single break for a glass of water or a smoke. *Tommy* hadn't been performed front-to-back since many of The Who's current fans were born.

Period piece or timeless classic? Lead singer Roger Daltry put *Tommy*'s return in perspective from the first moment he sauntered onto Radio City's spacious stage. "Show some respect," he said, quoting the late drummer Keith Moon. "It's a fucking opera."

Yes, and getting more and more like

Roger Daltry's voice can still reach the screaming heights that used to get fans out of their seats.

one as the years pass. At Radio City, ushers showed ticket holders to their velvet-covered seats and handed them embossed programs complete with libretto. Much of the audience wore suits; the few people up and dancing were asked to sit down. This may not have been opera, but it certainly wasn't your average rock concert.

Onstage, the number of performers *Tommy* needs had grown from 4 to 15, an impressive ensemble and chorus that only needed a few spears to keep the operatic tradition alive. The extra musicians were also necessary to keep alive The Who's reputation—earned when it was considered a compliment—as one of rock's loudest bands.

The Who are getting old; their spark plug, Keith Moon, died a decade ago, leaving only Daltry, bassist John Entwistle, and guitarist/guru Pete Townshend, all well into their 40s. They frankly needed the firepower of a five-man brass section, three backup singers, two percussionists, a keyboard player, and a lead guitarist to pick up the slack.

Rumors before the summer tour began gave Who fans the willies. Townshend was deaf; Daltry's voice was gone; Entwistle was just doing it for the money. Townshend refused to play electric guitar or do his trademark "windmill" guitar licks, relying on acoustic guitar and letting an anonymous session man do the tough parts.

But it turned out that The Who were just playing the same expectations game that George Bush and his spin doctors played before last year's presidential debates. Just after the sacred word *fuck* went out on a 300-station coast-to-coast radio hookup, The Who picked up their instruments and just about wrote themselves into rock-and-roll history all over again.

Daltry, who has returned to the curly-blond pretty boy look he sported during *Tommy*'s heydey, established almost from the start that his voice could still reach the same screaming heights that used to get fans out of their seats. Entwistle showed that the only thing he had changed was the color of his coat's Union Jack design—done over entirely in grays and black, as befits a rock-and-roll graybeard.

But Townshend's acoustic guitar got lost in the band's new tower-of-power sound, and it wasn't until his first major set piece, "Pinball Wizard," that he was able to step from behind the wall of noise. "Pinball Wizard" is a guitar virtuoso's dream, a series of fast, clean, almost drum-like chords that deserve the special treatment than an acoustic guitar can provide.

No one cheered during Townshend's performance of the song. Instead they sat, mesmerized by his handiwork, and left the cheering till the end. Once Townshend established his part in the wall of sound, it lingered in the audience's ears despite the lack of an electric boost. You couldn't always put your finger on the elusive line Townshend was strumming, but when he paused it was sorely missed.

Some rock acts suffer when taken out

FRANKIE ZITHS, APWORLDWIDE PHOTOS

of the studio, but *Tommy* is one that demands a live performance. Townshend, *Tommy*'s creator and the brains behind The Who, has always insisted that the audience is an important part of the act. "I've seen Who concerts where the vibrations were becoming so pure that I thought the whole world was just going to stop," Townshend once said. "The idea is to make the first real superstar....That star would be all of us."

Unfortunately, Townshend's published thoughts on the subject are mired in the vocabulary of the mid-1960s. By the time people found a less goofy way of expressing themselves, The Who had stopped performing *Tommy* in front of an audience. Radio City provided a post-modern test of Townshend's wish to make the audience part of the performance. Does this sound stupid because our 1980s sensibilities are so sophisticated, or does it sound stupid because it *is* stupid?

Rock opera does differ from its more traditional counterpart in one way: The audience gets to sing along. Indeed, there are moments in *Tommy* that require the audience to act as a chorus—particularly near the end, when Daltry's character has set himself up as a Messianic figure and the libretto calls for an audience to shout him down:

We're not gonna take it
Never have and never will...

With a huge bank of spotlights purposefully trained on the crowd, 4,000 bodies stood as one, chanting, dancing, sobbing, and pumping fists in the air. Four thousand voices took on the job of bringing *Tommy* home, proving Townshend right, and, not incidentally, giving Daltry's voice a bit of a rest.

But is it opera?

At the very least, opera should have a coherent narrative. But any attempts to pin Townshend down on the meaning of *Tommy* ultimately fail. The libretto (OK, lyrics) are ambiguous and specify no actions, no motives, no emotions. How can it be an opera if it doesn't have a story?

Yet at the very end, Townshend does provide a clue. By that point, the crowd usually sings along, but if they'd listen, they would hear The Who paying them very high praise:

Right behind *you*, I see the millions
On *you*, I see the glory
From *you*, I get opinions
From *you*, I get the story...

Right at the end, Townshend tips his hand. The audience determines the narrative, provides its own interpretation, pours out its own emotions, and gives The Who the story. Not even Wagner or Rossini would pamper the audience to this extent. So is *Tommy* opera?

No.

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T. Keating Holland is a pollster and opera aficionado in Washington, D.C.

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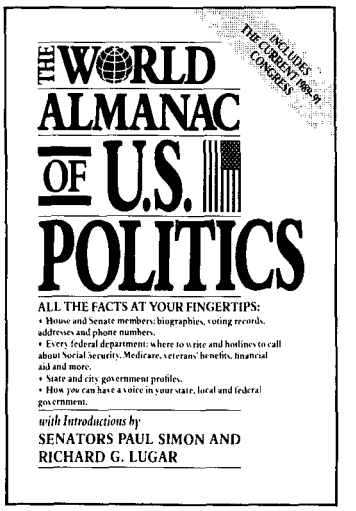
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TV OR NOT TV

BY ALAN PELL CRAWFORD

Cards on the table: I like TV. I even like trash TV. Correction: I *especially* like trash TV.

Which is not to suggest that I like trash *per se*, only that I ofttimes find it difficult to distinguish the trash from more respectable programming, so-called.

Put differently, given the choice between forthright, unapologetic trash, like "The Morton Downey, Jr., Show," and the simply trashy, like Barbara Walters, ex-fiancée of Roy Cohn, fawning over Henry Kissinger—my sympathies are with Mort.

Now, I don't just like trash TV in the abstract. I watch a great deal of it and, even when I do not always admire such programming, I nevertheless find it vastly more enjoyable and often a great deal less meretricious than more highly regarded fare.

Yuppie hero David Letterman: A TV show so hip that it mocks TV itself.

Not long back, one of those insufferably authentic characters on "thirtysomething"—the then-unemployed Elliot (Timothy Busfield)—announced that he was looking forward to the upcoming installment of "Geraldo."

"They're doing nude transvestites," Elliot crowed.

A knowingly hip one-liner like that serves a number of functions useful to with-it television shows geared to the yuppies whose *angst* they dramatize. First, such a joke flatters the viewer and, by so doing, presumably alleviates some small part of that *angst*.

Ersatz wit of this sort plays on the yuppie's sense of superiority—a superiority the source of which is at bottom aesthetic in nature. The joke, which every yuppie gets, is that "Geraldo" is tacky, as the yuppie is not. Tackiness being the ultimate vice in the yuppie's skewed moral scheme, snobbery becomes something of a virtue.

Second, by mocking other programs, jokes of this nature serve to reassure the viewer—who is not altogether comfortable that he's watching the boob tube in the first place—that it is really OK to be doing so, since he's watching TV that is so hip that it mocks TV itself.

No one does this number better, of course, than David Letterman. By ridiculing his own efforts, teasing the "Today Show," and taking shots at the GE executives who sign his paychecks, "Dave" pretends to engage in activities that are not just naughty but downright subversive. Herbert Marcuse, call your office.

The august *New York Review of Books*, in the meantime, felt moved recently to register its disapproval of television, an act of moral courage on a par, it would seem, with expressing solidarity with Salman Rushdie.

The late Jonathon Leiberson, who wrote the *New York Review* essay, even took exquisite pains to establish that he didn't ordinarily watch TV at all and only saw the programs he proceeded to pan because, having fallen seriously ill, he was confined to a hospital bed and, what with intravenous tubes in both arms, found it impossible to read.

"I tried to divert myself with an enormous book on the several generations of a distinguished southern slaveholding family that had passed through various trials during the Civil War," Leiberson wrote, "but the weight of the book proved so unmanageable that it constantly fell from my hands."

So deprived, Leiberson was forced to watch a lot of TV, insights into which he was kind enough to share with the other *New York Review* readers who don't watch TV. He wrote that the morning talk shows, for example, "possess a kind of incorruptible vulgarity," to which he became "immoderately drawn." Not unlike one of those pathetic souls who share their secrets with Sally or Phil, Lieberson himself—a TV addict, if you will—began to view his own somewhat shameful viewing habits as an "obsession."

Such sniffishness is perhaps to be expected from some quarters and is neither surprising nor especially remarkable. What is alarming, however, is that this kind of snobbery, once the exclusive preserve of those with graduate degrees, has now trickled down to the presumably less intellectually endowed.

Consider "Hard Time on Planet Earth," a recently canceled CBS series about an extraterrestrial warrior exiled to this planet for rehabilitation. The show can hardly be accused of pandering to yupsters.

If Martin Kove, who starred as Jesse, has ever played a lawyer, accountant, or advertising executive, this fact has escaped my attention. A cop on "Cagny & Lacey," Kove slips into blue-collar roles so comfortably that he is even seen on commercials from time to time, hawking malt liquor.

The audience for "Hard Time," it

would appear, was high schoolers, and not especially bright ones at that. The themes were decidedly adolescent in nature, the kids themselves all looked like they stepped out of Levi's 501 Jeans ads, and there was high-tech gimmickry as well as aliens. A "computer-generated cybernaut parole officer" called Control helped Jesse cope with earthly manners and mores.

In one episode, Jesse has to reunite a troubled teen (Darcy Marta) with her parents. Control (Charles Fleischer, also the voice of Roger Rabbit) notes that there exists a "wealth of information on the family structure" of earthlings in their collective "data base," which is...old television sitcoms.

This provides the occasion for running clips from "Father Knows Best," "Leave It To Beaver," and "My Three Sons." Control concludes that on this planet adults who take their cues from the "Grand Master Ward Cleaver" invariably "solve their children's problems in one-half hour."

Jesse tries to apply what he sees in these programs, too, but comes to understand—as we presumably more sophisticated beings tuned into "Hard Time" knew all along—that "real life" is not so simple. Which may account for why these supposed sophisticates find the old shows, with their naive assumptions about life's manageability, so terribly amusing.

Today's programs, it would follow, present new and bolder truths that a more sophisticated generation can handle—a notion today's programs are only too happy to encourage. In place of the old clichés, however, we simply get new ones. In "Hard Time," the family is reunited, mainly by generous applications of hugs, which is contemporary television's solution to all human problems, whether you're watching Sally Jessy Raphael or Baba Wawa.

Ward Cleaver may be out, but Leo Buscaglia is in, and whether we're better off for it isn't altogether clear.

Alan Pell Crawford has written for The Nation, Vogue, *and* National Review. *His TV column will appear monthly.*

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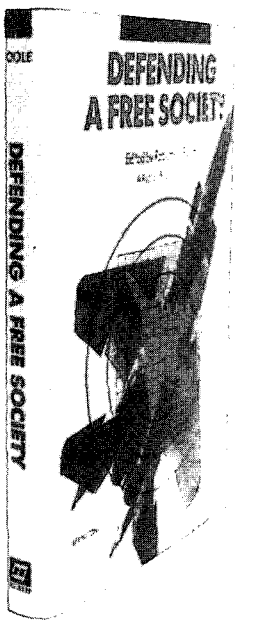

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A BLOOMIN' SHAME

BY DAVID BRUDNOY

It's not exactly the termination of "All in the Family" or the end of the Reagan era, for those who mourned those passings. But the decision by Berke Breathed to end *Bloom County*, one of the most popular daily comic strips in America, is both disquieting and saddening.

Breathed's new Sunday-only strip *Outland* will have begun by the time you read this. The strip features one citizen of Bloom County, the ghetto waif Ronald-Ann (named, presumably without much irony, after President Reagan). God (and Breathed) willing, the strip may also bring an appearance from Opus the penguin. Or maybe not.

So far, Breathed has not committed himself to anything other than his lead character and a tone combining fantasy with urban realism. We shall see. (Incidentally, *Outland* will be bylined "Berkely Breathed" because Breathed claims no one knew how to pronounce *Berke*.)

Meanwhile, readers across the nation feel bereft. Unlike Garry Trudeau, who fulfilled a promise to return to *Doonesbury* after a year's sabbatical, Breathed has pronounced a death sentence on *Bloom County*. Far be it for a libertarian such as myself to call for a federal investigation of this dastardly deed on Berke(ly) Breathed's part, much less for a law requiring him to renew *Bloom County*. But one can (and I do) wish his guilty conscience might bring him an occasional sleepless night. Beyond that, what can one do other than reminisce?

Bloom County was a half-Edenic, half-insane region of some unnamed state and some decidedly schizophrenic state of mind. Human beings and animals lived in harmony—many of them in something of a boarding house, others with their families, and still others in a dandelion patch.

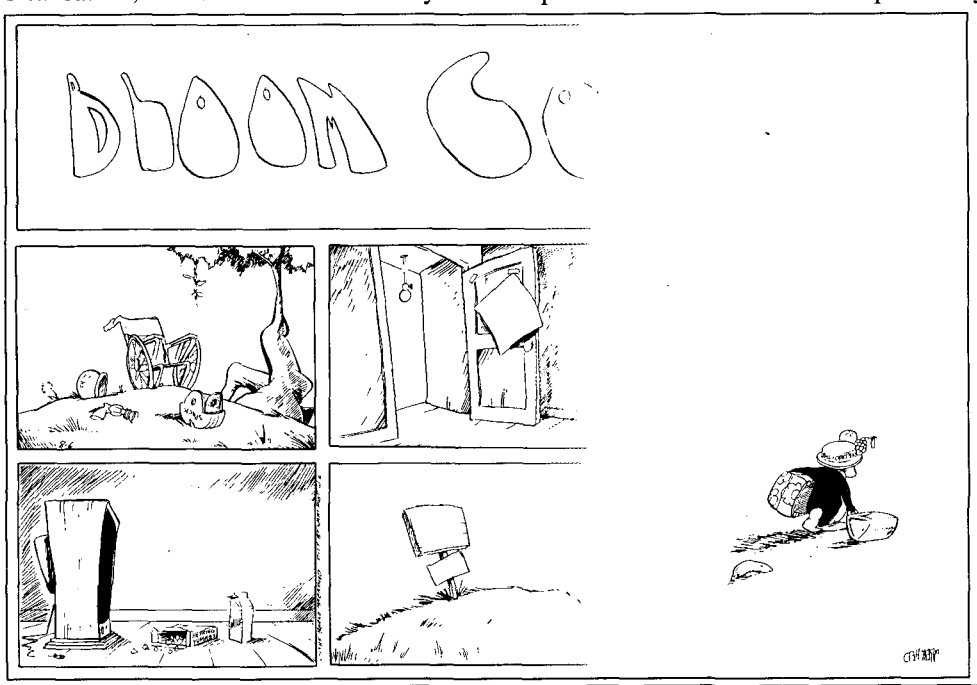
Milo Bloom—a small, blond, bespectacled newspaper writer—gave the strip its name and provided the leveling ingredient of normality. Binkley (perhaps Breathed's alter ego) lived with his father and spent his nights wrestling with his anxieties. These anxieties were very much real, emerging from time to time from his closet, terrifying him with, say, the prospect of President Dan Quayle.

Cutter John, consigned to a wheelchair, imagined himself a "Star Trek" explorer. A little black genius named Oliver Wendell Jones astounded his middle-class parents with his inventiveness and occasionally blew up their house. Ronald-Ann functioned as a token of what Reagan's social policies had supposedly led to: impoverishment and confusion.

And, of course, there was Steve Dallas. Steve began as an utterly amoral lawyer with the heart of a chauvinist pig, but he underwent a brain transplant and emerged as Mr. Sensitivity. Afterwards, Steve's parents (retrograde '50s types) found their values and even their language the bane of their son's existence. Mrs. Dallas still referred to blacks as "colored people," rather than Steve's preferred "people of color."

These characters and others opined on politics, products, and even other comic strips—sometimes with acid and bile, usually with verve and whimsy. On occasion, but only on occasion, an editor found *Bloom County* unbearable.

One notorious example was a brilliant series on animal experimentation in the cosmetics industry. Breathed has never been averse to naming names, and this series zeroed in on Mary Kay Cosmetics. This was probably dirty pool on Breathed's part, but since the piece was so intelligent and the satire so pointed, it may have actually been more informative than news coverage of the issue.



Bloom County dwelled, however, far less on this or that crusade than on ironic statements about the human condition in today's America. With Opus, the big-nosed, tremendously sensitive penguin as his

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THE **LATERAL** VIEW

object lesson, Breathed took on such yuppie crazes as liposuction and rhinoplasty. Opus's nose underwent both fat reduction and cutting; plastic surgeons were not amused, but the rest of us were. Opus the ultimate consumer, patron of all the catalogue retailers, faddist extraordinaire, served as a kind of flightless bird synecdoche for humankind in our most acquisitive and befuddled guise.

When the strip began, Opus looked very much like a real penguin, just as Mickey Mouse looked more like a rodent when Walt Disney first created him. Gradually, however, Opus put on weight, his nose grew bigger, and he came to serve as the alter ego of human beings. Opus also became the single most beloved *Bloom County* character, spawning a doll industry rivaling Garfield and Snoopy.

Never was anything made of the interspecies nature of the Bloom County community. The absolutely zonked-out feline Bill the Cat, an obvious shot at Garfield, ran for president with Opus as his running mate. They were more inviting than the Democratic or Republican tickets.

When Donald Trump's autobiography came out, Opus wrote *his* life story, which sold no copies until Milo gave it a sexy new title and filled it with wicked revelations about the nation's movers and shakers. If we lived it on the front page, we quickly relived it, with considerably more humor, on the comics page.

Bloom County joked about its own demise, assigning its characters to walk-on parts in other comic strips. Breathed sent his strip to oblivion with weeks of poignant, bittersweet, and often funny reflections on its creator's act of (May one say it?) betrayal of his readers by killing his own brainchild. We were given hints of the emptiness awaiting us and then, in the very last strip, Opus simply faded into nothingness.

Good night, sweet Opus; good night, *Bloom County*. May Berke(ly) Breathed know, with moments of regret, what a gem he has taken from us.

Contributing Editor David Brudnoy is WBZ *radio's late-night talk host and a film critic in Boston.*

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by Joe David

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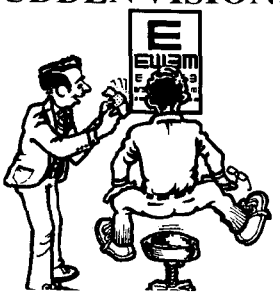

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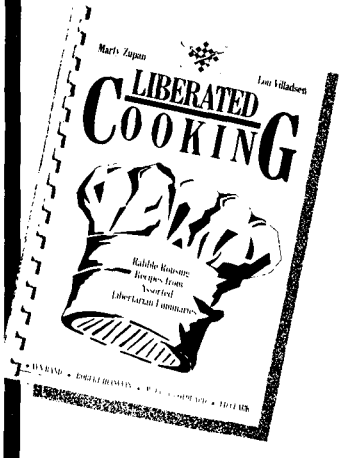

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Rare Acts of Courage

BY STEVEN W. MOSHER

Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience, edited by Geremie Barme and John Minford, New York: Hill & Wang, 491 pages, $19.95

SOUTHERN FILM CORP.

When Chinese students and workers marched by the millions, the Henry Kissingers, the Winston Lords, and the John K. Fairbanks were stunned. Reflecting this confusion in the ranks of China watchers, the *Washington Post* pronounced itself mystified by the sudden bursting forth of "a hunger for democracy which was unprecedented in China and which few people anywhere anticipated." They were equally shocked when the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party sent tanks and indiscriminately shooting soldiers against unarmed students and workers, resulting in a massacre of thousands.

The China watchers and media shouldn't have been stunned. Despite the flat, misleading interpretations of official propagandists and foreign apologists, Chinese political and artistic life had developed an unruly richness and anarchic complexity in the '80s. Had China watchers been listening to the young people, rather than just to superannuated and out-of-touch leaders like Deng Xiaoping, the student movement for democracy would not have caught them by surprise. Had they borne in mind recent Chinese history, the willingness of those same leaders to liquidate their political opposition would not have come as such a shock.

Seeds of Fire: Chinese Voices of Conscience reads like today's headlines, a bracing gust of wind straight from the Chinese democracy movement. Here, unencumbered by false or self-serving interpretations, in translations that are impeccable, are China's new generation of dissident writers and thinkers, appealing directly to the common humanity and conscience of Chinese and Westerners alike. The editors, Geremie Barme and John Minford, both of whom studied under the great sinologist Pierre Ryckmans (also known as Simon Leys), are to be congratulated for assembling this unique and fascinating anthology.

Not the least of their achievements in *Seeds of Fire* (the title comes from the work of Lu Xun, China's greatest 20th-century writer) is to bring within reach of the Western reader the full range of China's authentic voices. From novelists and cartoonists, to essayists and democratic activists, to newspaper reporters and film directors, all those engaged in the ongoing struggle against censorship and state oppression in China are represented.

A standout among the short stories included is Lin Xinwu's "Black Walls." A young man, something of an enigma to his neighbors, begins to paint the walls of his apartment black, a symbolic exorcism (no doubt) of the conformity forced upon him by the Chinese state. His neighborhood committee meets (all urban Chinese are under the control of such committees), mutters about the impropriety, and is set to intervene in force when a boy present derails their plan by innocently pointing out that the room is, after all, the young man's.

Chinese authorities have all too frequently resorted to the use of deadly force, as the several accounts of labor camps, prison trains, cadre schools, and places of exile amply illustrate. The most powerful indictment of the Chinese gulag is "Murder at Nenjiang Camp." Written by the well-known journalist Liu Binyan, who specializes in documentary reporting, it is the factual account of a prisoner who was gut-shot by guards for talking back. The man was left untended where he had fallen—it was the better part of a day before he actually expired—while a guard stood watch at a distance.

Chinese authors ply their craft in political currents that are uncharted and often treacherous. Their writings are

often greeted with official party bullyings (known as criticisms), and not a few have been required to engage in ritual self-flagellation (known as self-criticisms). Barme and Minford have interspersed bits of official criticisms throughout the text, providing much needed context for the Western reader who might otherwise wonder what all the fuss was about. Shortly after the publication of "Black Walls," Lin Xinwu was attacked by the *Literary Gazette*, the authoritative party journal of literary criticism, for having "created a fraudulent set of characters...to express ideas that are neither new nor of any profundity."

Each of the writers knows the fate of the students on Tiananmen Square may well be his or hers.

Not a few authors have actually gone aground on the shifting shoals of party intolerance and repression. Liu Binyan, for instance, was expelled from the party in 1987 for his reportorial indiscretions and has now defected. Others have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

Among the most moving passages in *Seeds of Fire* are excerpts from prison diaries. Noted dissident Wei Jingsheng's account of his days at Beijing Prison No. 1, which he calls the "Twentieth Century Bastille," is a grim and ghastly tale of psychological abuse, while Xu Wenli's description of his show trial could have been written by Kafka. For having the temerity to continue to set their thoughts to paper at the very time they were being punished for previous writings, both men were punished further, and Wei Jingsheng is now said to be insane.

To continue to write and publish beyond the bounds of the permissible is an act of political dissent. The system that launched the repression of the Hundred Flowers, the Cultural Revolution, and the campaign against "spiritual pollution" is still in place in China today. Nor have the methods used against dissidents in the past been repudiated, except as to nonessentials. Each of the writers in this book knows the fate of the students on Tiananmen Square may well be his or hers.

With the publication of *Seeds of Fire*, we need no longer rely on the alternately obscure, self-serving, or apologetic formulations of China watchers. Here are the authentic voices of China's conscience, speaking honestly about what is on their minds. Whether the pieces translated here will one day rank as literature remains to be seen. But they already rank, each and every one, as rare acts of courage.

Contributing Editor Steven W. Mosher is Bradley Resident Scholar at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C. He is on sabbatical from the Claremont Institute, where he is director of Asian Studies.

Doing Battle with Shadows

BY JULIUS LESTER

Destructive Generation: Second Thoughts about the '60s
By Peter Collier and David Horowitz, New York: Summit Books, 337 pages, $19.95

Such an odd book. Part narrative, part analysis, and part autobiography, the parts are more satisfying than the whole.

Destructive Generation is divided into three sections of three, four, and three essays, respectively. The most satisfying are the essays in the first section, "The Dancers and the Dance," where authors Peter Collier and David Horowitz do what they do best: write narrative biographies. They tell the stories of Fay Stender, the radical lawyer for Soledad Brother George Jackson, of Bernadine Dohrn and the Weather Underground, and finally of two friends and Vietnam veterans, one who became a policeman, the other a narcotics dealer.

Collier and Horowitz are content to let the stories unfold without the polemics and cheap shots that characterize too many of the later essays. The story of Fay Stender is the most devastating, as we are led through a life in which she begins as a child-prodigy concert pianist and ends with suicide after she is shot and paralyzed by a black ex-convict who believed she had betrayed George Jackson. In their narrative about the Weather Underground, the authors create a portrait of surreal madness by simply reporting what members of the Weather Underground were thinking, saying, and doing. If one needs evidence of a strain of madness in the '60s, this essay should be sufficient.

By contrast, the discursive essays in

Peter Collier and David Horowitz seem intent on being on the side of virtue.

Destructive Generation are not compelling reading. In these two sections, "Second Thoughts" and "Self-Portraits," we come to what presumably is the heart of the book—namely, how Collier and Horowitz, former editors of *Ramparts* and members in good standing of the New Left, became Reagan supporters and political conservatives.

Much of the review attention given the book has treated its authors as traitors only a little lower than Benedict Arnold. This merely underscores the case that Collier and Horowitz themselves want to make—that in the name of socialist revolution, the left is willing and eager to sacrifice democracy. Both authors have had second thoughts about the '60s and their involvement in the radical move-

BRUCE HOERTEL

ment. That many of their former comrades-in-arms (comrades-in-pamphlets sounds less romantic) react as if it is impermissible to reexamine one's experience is sad, to say the least.

This intolerance suggests that what Collier and Horowitz say about the '60s and the New Left must be close to the truth. For the most part it is.

They describe the left's utopianism as "a secular religion" and write that protecting "the faith is the highest calling of the radical creed." In his autobiographical essay, Horowitz describes the secular religiosity of the left: "Totalitarianism is the possession of reality by a political idea—the Idea of the socialist kingdom of heaven on earth, the redemption of humanity by political force. To radical believers, this Idea is so beautiful it is like God himself. It provides the meaning of a radical life. It is the solution that makes everything possible: it is the end that justifies the regrettable means. Belief in the kingdom of socialist heaven is the faith that transforms vice into virtue, lies into truth, evil into good."

This is, of course, not a new insight. Eric Hoffer expressed it succinctly in *The True Believer*, and Paul Hollander's *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba* gives the historical background and sociological analysis that enables one to see left-wing utopianism very clearly.

Unfortunately, *Destructive Generation* is marred by a pervasive personal animus. Describing the Rev. William Sloan Coffin, the authors write: "Despite his profession as a man of the cloth, Coffin's true faith had for some time been left-wing causes." That is character assassination and it is unnecessary.

Peter Collier, in his autobiographical essay, says that the New Left had "an allergic reaction to ideas" that has made its followers incapable of looking back and having second thoughts. This attitude is characteristic of the book. Collier and Horowitz seem intent on being on the side of virtue, and virtue lies in having second thoughts about one's '60s experience. Collier writes that "none of the Movement heavies has written credibly, let alone eloquently, about such issues as belief and betrayal...none of them ever had a political dark night of the soul that would nonetheless cast light on the common experience." Even for those like this reviewer who think that Collier and Horowitz are, for the most part, correct in their analysis, their sanctimonious tone makes listening to them difficult.

The turning point for Collier and Horowitz was the murder of *Ramparts* magazine's bookkeeper by the Black Panther Party in 1974. They were

Unfortunately, Collier and Horowitz devote much of their book to settling old scores.

stunned, although they admit that they were never at ease with the party. But why had it taken them so long to see that the Panthers were and always had been a group of thugs?

I do not pose the question to condemn or criticize their lack of foresight but to suggest that seeking an answer to it would have enriched their hindsight. Perhaps they would have uncovered the reasons a significant portion of a generation could not see the reality of the Panthers, the Weather Underground, Cuba, North Vietnam, and so on. In other words, what was it in American culture that made the '60s possible?

Collier comes close to raising the crucial questions when he writes that "My generation had been given a more comfortable fate than my father's, but we hated our lives, despite all the talk of 'love.' We had projected that hatred onto everything around us." Collier does not ask why. Horowitz asserts that he has "gained respect for the ordinary experience of others and of myself." The question is why he and a generation of youth did not already have that respect for the ordinary others.

Unfortunately, Collier and Horowitz are intent on settling scores (especially with former leaders of Students for a Democratic Society Tom Hayden and Todd Gitlin) and on being superior to those still stuck with their first thoughts. Horowitz (and I would assume Collier, also) now considers himself a conservative. He maintains that he has "not exchanged one ideology for another; I have freed myself from the chains of an Idea."

Destructive Generation does not confirm that this is so. Rather, Collier and Horowitz seem gripped by new ideas—anticommunism and patriotism. There is nothing wrong with either, but it is difficult to distinguish the zeal the authors bring to these ideas from the zeal they brought to the New Left.

"The sixties Left colluded with totalitarian movements," they write. "But it was clear and candid, and often painfully so, about what it was doing. The Left that succeeded it not only colludes with totalitarianism but tries to deceive people about what it is doing. The deviousness of this Left, along with the weakened position of the United States in the post-Vietnam era, *makes patriotic commitment important in a way that it may not have been when America's power was more secure. It is now necessary, as it may not have been in the past, to be vigilant not only about enemies without but also, however unfashionable the phrase may have become, about America's enemies within as well"* (italics added).

Whenever anyone starts talking about "enemies within," I get very nervous. No, I get scared, because only those who are convinced that they are in possession of the truth are bold enough and confident enough to call someone else an "enemy," especially when that someone else is a fellow citizen.

The risk and the test of a democratic society is its ability to counter the very one who would destroy that society. Such a threat can come from the anticommunist as well as from the communist. We can only hope that the passage of time will temper the authors' zeal, and they will understand that is possible to reexamine and repudiate one's past without turning it into a kingdom of evil. Neither is it necessary to see the future as a battle between the forces of darkness and light.

Yes, the '60s were a destructive generation and we are still coming to terms with the consequences. But Collier and Horowitz place all the blame on the

adolescents who composed that generation. However, that generation was the product of American society, and American society colluded with its youth to make that generation destructive. Why?

The biggest disappointment is that Collier and Horowitz write as if the '60s did not occur within a specific historical and cultural context. The result is a book with parts that shine, but a whole that does not reflect light, because the authors are too busy doing battle with shadows.

Julius Lester teaches in the Department of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He was a keynote speaker at the Second Thoughts Conference in 1987.

Elbow Room for Ordinary Folks

BY DONALD J. BOUDREAUX

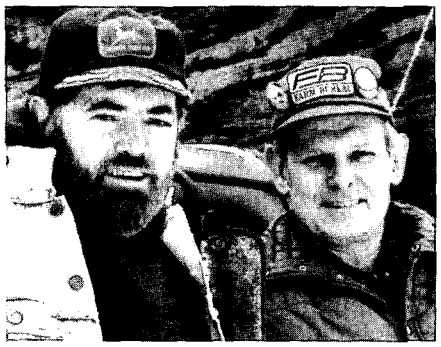
The Vermont Papers, by Frank Bryan and John McClaughry
Chelsea, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 308 pages, $18.95

Thomas Sowell closes his book *Knowledge and Decisions* by defining freedom as "the right of ordinary people to find elbow room for themselves and a refuge from the rampaging presumptions of their 'betters.'" Frank Bryan and John McClaughry share Sowell's conception of freedom.

Like Sowell, they emphasize that among freedom's fiercest enemies are intellectuals armed with lots of theories and presumptions about how society can be programmed to achieve someone's pet result. *The Vermont Papers* enthusiastically offers practical guidance to those who wish to implement a government that effectively keeps intellectuals and social planners from usurping the elbow room of ordinary folks.

Bryan and McClaughry argue that "real democracy cannot, by definition, be writ large." Their plan—they *do* have a detailed plan—is to radically restructure state and local governments so that participatory democracy becomes the foundation for all governmental functions. The key step in this restructuring is to downsize the basic unit of government in the state. Although their plan is too detailed to recount here, its main features can be outlined. And although their plan focuses on Vermont, the authors clearly believe that it is applicable to other states.

Bryan and McClaughry propose that the fundamental unit of state government be the "shire"—a geographic region



Frank Bryan and John McClaughry: a romantic vision of human-scale democracy

small enough to ensure that its members share similar values and perspectives and, hence, a genuine sense of citizenship. They claim that the number of citizens in the optimal-size shire is 10,000, though the authors never explain how they arrive at this number.

Each town in a shire will hold town meetings at which citizens vote for town officers, state senators, and for (archaically named) shire "reeves" who will represent the town in the shire legislature, called the "Shire-Moot." The Shire-Moot will have all legislative authority for the shire, as well as the right to elect a shire council. The shire council, along with a hired shire manager, will administer the day-to-day business of the shire. A system of shire courts will replace the existing state superior and district courts, with shire judges elected by the Shire-Moot. Each shire will be part of a federation of shires, much as the several states in the United States are now part of a federation of state governments.

The state government has a definite place in the Bryan-McClaughry plan, but its role would be greatly reduced in scope from the role it currently plays. Significantly, "delegated powers go to the state, reserved powers to the shires...always with the presumption that power resides in the shires."

Unfortunately, the authors give no convincing reason why their ideal state government would not steal powers intended to be reserved for the shires. The evisceration of the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution should cause Bryan and McClaughry to ponder a bit on how exactly the shires could be protected from the seemingly insatiable thirst for power by federal governments.

Nevertheless, the authors insist that under their plan the state government will be "radically smaller" and concentrate its efforts on protecting the environment, providing certain technical services to the shires, and conducting state "foreign policy." This latter responsibility mainly involves state relations with other states and with Washington, D.C. The shire will remain the fundamental unit of government.

Bryan and McClaughry have a downright maudlin vision of the future in which human-scale democracies become sources of great citizen pride. They believe, for example, that the shire will be so important to sense of community that "once a decade, on Shire Day, a relay of young citizens who have come of age since the last occasion will carry out the ancient Anglo-Saxon custom of perambulating the shire perimeter—perhaps on snowmobiles...or on bikes, or by runners—an act reaffirming the shire's traditional bounds." Frequent, romantic gushing such as this detracts from the book's merit.

Bryan and McClaughry's book should not be read as a contribution to political philosophy. Instead, the authors seek to present a workable, politically feasible plan for decentralized state government that offers an alternative to existing state governments with their massive bureauc-

racies and central-planning biases. (The national government is mentioned only infrequently and in passing—although always critically.) The authors' ideological and philosophical positions form the backdrop for their blueprint of a new form of state government, but the book is not about ideology or political philosophy. It is a handbook of sorts for those who wish to implement "human-scale democracy" where they live.

But how valid is the authors' maxim that decentralized, participatory democracy ought to be the foundation of society? The answer to this question depends on what other forms of social organization are among the reasonable alternatives to the type of impersonal, centralized structures so despised by Bryan and McClaughry. Unquestionably, hands-on democracy of the type advocated in *The Vermont Papers* is far superior to nationwide, and even statewide, planning and intervention by huge bureaucracies. This is true regardless of whether these bureaucracies are created by an authoritarian tyrant or by legislatures in republics such as the United States or the State of Vermont.

No matter how well staffed and well intentioned legislatures and bureaucracies are, when the fundamental unit of collective decision making is too large—and, hence, distant from ordinary citizens—legislatures and bureaucracies will inevitably be buffeted about between the granting of monopoly privileges to special-interest groups and the empowering of arrogant intellectuals to impose on innocent people their newly concocted schemes for "improving" society. The radically decentralized system of government proposed by Bryan and McClaughry would surely put strict limits on the ability of government to create and sell monopolies, as well as on the government's willingness to use unwitting citizens as guinea pigs in unchecked social experiments—such as those characteristic of government-supplied education throughout the United States.

However, decentralization is not sufficient to restore government that is useful to—rather than uses—its citizens. Human-scale government is not the only alternative to centralized government.

Constitutionally limited government that reserves most decision-making powers to private citizens in their roles as consumers, entrepreneurs, workers, and volunteers also must be considered as a viable alternative. Although I'm confident that Bryan and McClaughry agree with this statement, their failure to discuss the proper constitutional limits on the power of human-scale governments is disappointing. Perhaps this failure is due to Bryan and McClaughry's correct understanding that, all other things being equal, smaller and more localized governments—because of competition from other jurisdictions—simply cannot get away with being as tyrannical and redis-

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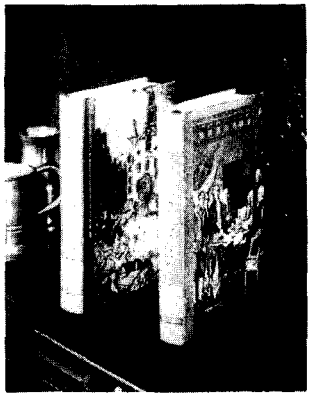

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tributionist as more centralized regimes.

But this does not imply that constitutional limitations on human-scale governments are not worthwhile. Indeed, some local governments, as currently constituted, readily run roughshod over individual freedom. As long as collective decisions are not made by unanimous consent, every person, even under a government in a human-scale jurisdiction, runs the risk of having at least some freedoms curtailed and some property expropriated. Although it seems noble to put trust in the wisdom and fairmindedness of citizens meeting in a town hall and as a Shire-Moot, constitutional proscriptions on what the local and shire governments can do might ultimately be more comforting to citizens who value their liberties and property.

The Vermont Papers is an important work, in spite of the fact that Bryan and McClaughry overromanticize the virtues of small-community life and discount the great advantages obtained by an extensive division of labor throughout society. The book will be especially challenging—and a worthwhile antidote—to the all-too-typical libertarian who ignores the fact that people do indeed attach positive value to life in a community in which most citizens share certain communitarian values. If we applaud the market for supplying individuals with their favorite flavor of ice cream, consistency requires that we applaud a political system that supplies each person with his or her preferred style of community life without violating the rights of others.

The radically decentralized system of governments proposed by Bryan and McClaughry represents a step toward, if you will, "communitarian libertarianism" in which community values are nurtured while the elbow room of ordinary people is shielded from the rampaging presumptions of their "betters." A book that goes as far as Bryan and McClaughry's in showing how such a system can be practically implemented deserves attention and admiration.

Don Boudreaux, on leave from his position as assistant professor of economics at George Mason University, is studying law at the University of Virginia.

A Heap of Cynicism

BY ED REGIS

Intellectual Compromise: The Bottom Line, by Michael T. Ghiselin
New York: Paragon House, 256 pages, $24.95

Michael T. Ghiselin's *Intellectual Compromise: The Bottom Line* is another one of those books that tries to explain a complex phenomenon in terms of a theory that was not meant to cover it; for some reason, this seems to be a growing fad. The trend began, so far as I know, in 1976 with Richard Dawkins's book *The Selfish Gene*. The book included a chapter called "Memes," in which the development of ideas was said to follow the principles of natural selection, a view that's not at all implausible once you think about it. Ideas, after all, are "born," just as animals are; they replicate in the process of being communicated from person to person; and they even mutate, when people make their own alterations to the idea being communicated.

Later, in 1988, historian George Basalla argued in his book *The Evolution of Technology* that technology itself develops in accordance with Darwinian principles: New inventions arise when small alterations are made to an old one; if the invention fills a technological niche, it flourishes; if not it becomes extinct, and so on. So this is the prescription: Take an all-encompassing theory, apply it to some field, and see what happens. That's what Ghiselin does in *Intellectual Compromise*.

Ghiselin is a biologist and so you might think that he, too, like Dawkins and Basalla before him, would end up applying Darwin's theory to yet another discipline, but no. The all-encompassing theory *he* starts with is economics, as in the law of supply and demand, the division of labor, and cost-benefit analysis. The field he applies it all *to* is science, or, more properly, to scientists themselves, to the ways in which they conduct their business in these bottom-line days of the late 20th century.

Freshness, supposedly, is the reason for doing this: We're supposed to get a whole new slant on the discipline under study, novel perspectives, perhaps even bright new solutions to old problems. Unfortunately, we don't get any of that from Ghiselin's book. What we get, by and large, is an exhaustive, rigorously cynical account of how scientists can and do operate from base motives.

"We shall proceed through a series of topics," Ghiselin says at the outset, "explaining why scientists, as such, behave as they do." True to his word, the author considers such topics as the academic division of labor, the costs and benefits of cheating, common strategies for marketing one's ideas, the economics of scholarly citation (you cite my paper and I'll cite yours), techniques of administrative buck-passing, fraud in science publishing, how to doctor grant proposals to ensure funding, and so on and so forth.

Throughout it all, scientists are portrayed in the worst possible light: If there's a way in which a practicing scientist could go wrong at any stage of the game from undergraduate student to emeritus professor, Ghiselin is sure to have found it and to have laid out all the details in great and cynical completeness.

As far as his description of the problem goes, there's not much in the book that anyone could disagree with. But one has to wonder what's the point of it all. For it's not as if Ghiselin is telling us anything really new.

Take, for example, chapter 9, "The Costs and Benefits of Cheating." Everyone has a pretty good picture of the pros and cons of cheating by about age nine or so, but Ghiselin nevertheless marches through all the so-called incentives that

operate to make scientists want to plagiarize, misrepresent someone else's position, get back at their enemies in print, muscle in on someone else's research project so as to get a free ride on their publication, or sabotage their competitors through anonymous peer reviewing.

All this happens, admittedly. But anyone who's been in an academic environment for more than five minutes *knows* that it happens and is already quite aware of the associated costs and benefits. So it is in the other chapters as well: Very little that Ghiselin says is wrong, it's just stuff that we already knew.

Then maybe the book's reason for being is that the author has a solution to the problem. Indeed he does, and in the last chapter of the book, "On Keeping Science Pure," Ghiselin reveals it. It's that scientists ought to be more honest. "So far as the problems of academia go," he says, "one solution might be to adopt a more favorable attitude toward honesty in all of our conduct, and not just in the scholarly life." Not only is this *one* solution, it's the *only* solution Ghiselin offers in the course of the book. Again, you can't say that this is *wrong*, it's just not exactly *news*. It's not even helpful.

What you can say on behalf of Ghiselin's book is that it's clearly written, with plenty of vivid analogies, well-chosen examples, and lots of insider anecdotes and vignettes, many of them taken from episodes in Ghiselin's own life. And if anyone out there still harbors the delusion that scientists are above the fray (because they pursue, after all, The Truth), Ghiselin's book will come as a much-needed, albeit rather shocking, corrective. But that's about all you can say.

The rest of it is a dreary recitation of well-known abuses. Indeed, the author doesn't even go into the problem of dishonesty very deeply, paying no attention to whether operating from base motives might in some cases lead to *good* science. Rather, his touchstone is the refrain, "A good scientist never lies," which is advanced as if its truth were self-evident, which it is not. In fact, Ghiselin himself accuses George Gaylord Simpson of dishonesty but later calls Simpson one of the "grand old men of evolutionary biology."

So, why do we have this book? More than anything, Ghiselin comes across as a scientist who has reached that point in his career where he's not getting any new ideas and so looks around for something else to do.

Ghiselin's own response to this common plight is to cast a jaundiced eye over all that he has seen and experienced during the course of his long and productive career. Naturally, he's seen lots of abuses and has had to put up with his share of idiots, bastards, and fools. He's fed up and has decided that he's not going to take it anymore.

Nothing wrong with this, of course, except that in order for the result to be a positive contribution to the practice of science or anything else, it's got to be more than a list of charges followed by a five-page pep talk. As it is, the book is sometimes embarrassingly, even naively, self-serving, as the author evens up old scores and gets back at his teachers, critics, reviewers, and other assorted opponents, illustrating in front of our eyes some of the tackiest practices he complains of.

Ed Regis, author of Who Got Einstein's Office?, *writes frequently on science topics.*

Marijuana: Costs of Abuse, Costs of Control, by Mark Kleiman, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 217 pages, $37.95. The War on Drugs continues to consume billions of dollars in government spending each year. But the ironic result of spending all this money, argues Mark Kleiman, a lecturer in public policy at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School, is that government seizures have forced consumers to consume more dangerous drugs than they would have if the government had not started its "war."

In *Marijuana: Costs of Abuse, Costs of Control*, Kleiman looks at the results of the federal government's efforts to eliminate marijuana production, distribution, and consumption. In fiscal year 1982, Kleiman estimates four federal agencies (the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Customs Service, and the Coast Guard) spent $423 million on anti-marijuana efforts (38 percent of overall federal antidrug spending). By fiscal year 1986, Kleiman estimates, the figure had risen to $636 million, consuming about the same percentage of federal time and funds.

But the billions spent by the feds had little effect on checking the marijuana trade. While overall consumption fell by 4 percent, consumers shifted from smoking less potent Latin American dope to more powerful domestic sinsemilla. Sinsemilla prices dropped by 7 percent; imported marijuana prices rose by 6 percent. And despite the efforts of thousands of federal, state, and local dopebusters, Kleiman says, "there does not appear to have been any prolonged or widespread shortages."

Why can't the federal government win the war on marijuana? Kleiman notes that marijuana production and distribution is an extremely decentralized business; federal seizures of large "mother ships" from Colombia have caused the distribution trade to shift to smaller operations in the United States and Mexico. Because the marijuana business comprises many small distributors and growers who will fervently protect their investments—a domestic dope grower who loses his crop can forfeit four to six months' earnings—Kleiman believes that the federal government will never win its war on marijuana.

One hazard created by government prohibitions of the paraphernalia used to smoke marijuana is that the state indirectly encourages the most hazardous forms of dope smoking. Marijuana is a potent carcinogen, with about four times as much cancer-causing tar as cigarettes made from tobacco. Using bongs or water pipes removes these tars, ensuring safer dope smoking. But "antiparaphernalia" laws that prohibit the sale of bongs, Kleiman notes, indirectly encourage marijuana consumers to smoke joints, thus increasing their risks of lung cancer. (Other alleged harmful effects of marijuana, Kleiman adds, such as claims that dope smoking causes chromosome defects or "cerebral atrophy," remain unproven.)

—Martin Morse Wooster

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LOCAL HEROES

BY THOMAS W. HAZLETT

The HUD scandal has revitalized those of us who had assumed the spirit of enterprise to be dying in America; that old Yankee hustle still has some life. Why the headlines are filled, however, with such dog-bites-man fare as "Ex-Sen. George Murphy May Have Used Influence to Gain HUD Subsidies" is curious. Who did you think were keeping all those simply exquisite Washington, D.C., eateries in the black, if not the influence peddlers from Terms Past? Perhaps all those *current* public servants who attempt to privatize public resources by dancing around the lines of conflict-of-interest law?

Yet, the federal government, I am convinced, is a piker in the corruption game. It's just too competitive a market. Too many competing interests; too many competing sellers of the public interest (535 in Congress alone); too many competing news snoopers. The real seat of our government, in every sense, is City Hall, which barely noses out state legislatures in a bruising Corruption Bowl. For all the right-wing grousing about the horrors of Washington and the majesty of the government "closest to the people" (yeah, like right inside their wallets), state and local governments in America are notoriously shady enterprises, demonstrating the twin evils of local monopoly and a cozy-with-the-powers press.

It is not just the Koch scandals in New York, epic corruption in its own right, or that Washington Mayor Marion Barry could easily lay claim to the "Noriega of North America" title were there to be any unfixed competition for the honor, or the legacy of Mayor Daley I in Chicago. It's that even the straight arrows in local government have such abundant opportunities for cash—and so little oversight from lazy and generally incompetent City Hall reporters—that they'd have to be constantly on their toes to avoid having some unearned income land in their money market accounts. And virgins are no match for the politically macho down at the zoning board.

Take the stench emanating from the California state capitol. When the feds set up a sting operation in 1986, to see if it was really possible to corrupt the democratic system, they were astonished at how far their dollars would stretch. Establishing a phony private firm, Gulf Shrimp Fisheries Inc., the G-men requested legislation entitling the company to government subsidies. In a tribute to responsive government, the bill was drawn in a flash and zipped through both houses without opposition. The FBI agents, worried that they had tampered with the process, then notified the governor, who vetoed the measure. *But they had to tell him.*

The feds are now attempting to prove to a grand jury that key legislators took the campaign money, just a few thousand, in fact, in exchange for legislative favors. The Democratic state senator who carried the 1986 bill (similar legislation sailed through in 1988 with different backers) holds that the firm received the legislative grant on its own merits, by portraying itself as "a poor little outfit that hadn't a pot to cook in and wanted to borrow money to set up a little organization and hire a few unskilled folks." (Just as on game shows, the legislature makes you answer a quiz question before it doles out the cash.)

Note the sort of tale that merits taxpayer dollars; note further the sort of empirical investigation that accompanies legislative action. Given that this enterprising image was woven out of whole cloth, one may infer precisely how diligent the legislature is in separating bona fide claims from superfluous ones.

In Los Angeles, mayor-for-life Tom Bradley (just reelected to his fifth term in a pro forma procedural balloting), has been using his position to collect multiple $18,000-a-year fees to either "consult" or serve on the boards of financial institutions. These institutions, coincidentally, happen to be lucky enough to land million-dollar city deposits in *non-interest-bearing* accounts.

Once this came to the very lethargic attention of the *Los Angeles Times* (the story was broken by the far lesser *Herald*), Bradley reacted in a strange variety of ways, declaring there was no conflict of interest—but resigning his banking posts and denying that anything untoward had been involved. One piece of evidence was sensational: Someone used white-out in an attempt to erase "per the mayor" notation on documents instructing the city to shift L.A. funds into Far East National Bank, a Bradley consulting client.

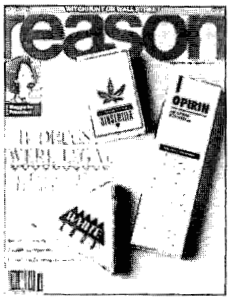
No kidding. White-out. As a former semibearded president (who once used 18 minutes of audio white-out) said, "it only makes it worse when you cover it up."

I'd give Pete Rose 8-5 that Tom Bradley's not any lower than the median local official, or state legislator, in America. Take the recent mayor of Syracuse, Lee Alexander. He was convicted last year of extorting a wide range of city contractors for $1.2 million. What is noteworthy is that this felon was thought by his peers to be highly honorable—he was elected president, in fact, of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. But give a man a 16-year municipal incumbency and it becomes cloudy as to where public dealing stops and private wheeling begins. I believe the confusion is wide-spread.

Statistical evidence exists to support this view. In 1987, the FBI conducted a sting investigation involving New York City public servants. They offered bribes to 106 civic leaders; 105 grabbed them instantly. But the 106th refused to be pulled into the net. He insisted upon holding out for a higher offer.

Contributing Editor Thomas W. Hazlett teaches economics and public policy at the University of California, Davis.

TIS THE SEASON



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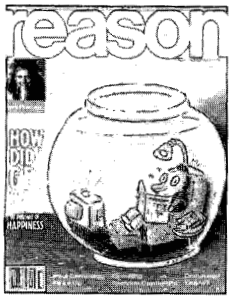

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The best guess

Remember, these reflections are invisible. Truck reflections can be ten times stronger than car reflections. How can the operator know for sure which vehicle is responsible for the number?

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